COMPLETE NOVEL BY HOLMAN DAY

No. 1, Vol. 37 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

PUBLISHED JUNE 23, 1915

Why Not Follow a Good Example

(FROM THE POPULAR MAGAZINE LETTER BOX)

ILLINOIS.

SIRS: Find inclosed P. O. money order for $3.00 to renew my subscription to THE POPULAR MAGAZINE. I can't do without it—it's getting better all the time. Give us more of Lynde, Bower, and Sinclair.—O. B. RIVES, Rock Bridge, Ill.

MASSACHUSETTS.

DEAR SIRS: Inclosed is a check for my 1915 subscription. . . . I should greatly regret the absence of THE POPULAR from our table, since it gives us at the moments when fiction, undiluted by problem or didactic purpose, is demanded by a tired, tense, or troubled mind, a most satisfactory feast. For the story of mystery, adventure, or realistic humor, always well written, always wholesome, always fostering a sincere, optimistic, and efficient attitude toward life, there is no rival in the magazine world to-day which gives the quality which you provide in such good measure.—CLARE J. A. JOSLYN, Lynn, Mass.

TEXAS.

DEAR SIRS: By an oversight of mine my subscription to THE POPULAR ran out. Please find inclosed $3.00 money order for another year's reading. I have been a reader of THE POPULAR for three years, and I consider it one of the best story magazines published.—T. C. EASTEY, Pitt Bridge, Texas.

NEW YORK.

GENTLEMEN: I sent my renewal to you for THE POPULAR on January 5th. . . . I suppose you always like to know when one appreciates your magazine, so I will say I think it improves with every number. Mr. Brown told a friend the other day that he never had read one poor story in THE POPULAR.—MRS. J. D. BROWN, Savona, New York.

MICHIGAN.

GENTLEMEN: I am inclosing my check for another three years' subscription to THE POPULAR MAGAZINE. I have taken the magazine constantly for nearly ten years, and must say that I consider it the best magazine published to-day, and have become so accustomed to looking forward to it twice a month that I should feel decidedly lost without it—L. A. BURHAUS, Corunna, Mich.

FLORIDA.

GENTLEMEN: Inclosed is my check for $3.00 for one year's subscription to your very popular POPULAR. I devour it, as Old Man Jucklin says, "from kiver to kiver," and I look forward to its coming as regularly as the two weeks roll around. Your stories are *all* good, clean, interesting, and instructive; and your editorials broad and elevating.—P. A. HEWITT, Bradentown, Fla.

VERMONT.

GENTLEMEN: Inclosed find bank draft for $6.00 for the renewal of THE POPULAR for three years. I have bought THE POPULAR every month since I read the first number, October, 1904. Your magazine is the only one that suits me.—MRS. ANNIE WARD, Brattleboro, Vermont.

PENNSYLVANIA.

GENTLEMEN: Please find inclosed check for $3.00 for one year's subscription to THE POPULAR. I want to say that I enjoy your magazine just as much as I did when it first came out. The stories are clean, and true to life. With best wishes.—OLIVER C. GRINSTEAD, West Homestead, Pa.

Two Guns That Are Sportsmen's Favorites

THERE are many kinds of repeating shotguns — both pump action and autoloading—some to be had at very low prices. But it is typical of sportsmen that the great majority prefer Remington-UMC by reason of Remington-UMC achievements in arms and ammunition, and the performance of Remington-UMC Pump and Autoloading Shotguns in the hands of the average man.

Remington-UMC Pump Gun—"The Good Old Standby"—six shots, bottom ejection, solid breech, hammerless, safe.

Remington-UMC Autoloading Shotgun—"The Auto Shotgun that *Works*." 5 shots—simply pull the trigger for each shot. Solid breech, hammerless, safe.

Go to the Remington-UMC dealer. He can give you all the mechanical details—*he knows the difference in guns.*

Whichever you prefer—Pump or Autoloading—you can put your money into a Remington and be sure of getting a *real gun.*

REMINGTON ARMS-UNION METALLIC CARTRIDGE CO.

Woolworth Bldg. (233 *Broadway*) *New York City*

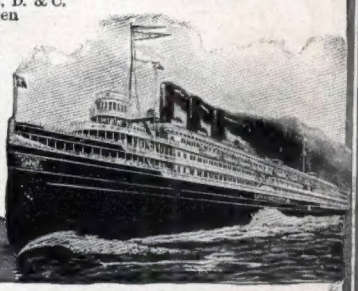
Take Your Ocean Trip This Year on America's Great Inland Seas

D & C LAKE LINES

The most wonderful vacation yet—a thousand mile voyage on the Great Lakes, and an outing in the north country. The historical resorts of Northern Michigan await you with all the enchantments of primeval nature—shady majestic woods, delightful waters, awe-inspiring scenery. Every pleasure is there—bathing, boating, fishing, golfing, camping, sight-seeing. First-class hotel accommodations and boarding houses at reasonable rates.

The Coast Line to Mackinac—Six Trips Weekly

Four trips weekly from Toledo and Detroit to Mackinac Island and Way Ports. Special steamer, two trips weekly from Cleveland, June 25th to September 10th, direct to Mackinac Island, no stops enroute except at Detroit and Alpena. In addition to above, D. & C. line operates daily service between Detroit and Cleveland and Detroit and Buffalo. Delightful day trips between Detroit and Cleveland during July and August, four trips weekly. Daily service between Toledo and Put-in-Bay.



Railroad Tickets accepted for transportation on D. and C. Line steamers between Detroit and Buffalo or Detroit and Cleveland, either direction. Send two cent stamp for illustrated pamphlet and Great Lakes Map, containing information regarding routes and rates. Address, L. G. Lewis, Gen. Passenger Agent.

A set of artistic poster stamps sent on receipt of five cents

"D. & C. Talisman" Send one dollar cash or money order, for D. & C. Good Luck golden frog men's scarf pin or women's brooch pin, set with Mexican rubies and emeralds.

DETROIT & CLEVELAND NAVIGATION COMPANY
13 Wayne Street, Detroit, Michigan
PHILIP H. McMILLAN, Pres. A. A. SCHANTZ, Vice-Pres. & Gen. Mgr.
All D. & C. Steamers arrive and depart new Third Ave. Wharf, Detroit

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

offer employment for life at a salary ranging from $800 to $1800 per year, with short hours under pleasant conditions and no fear of "layoffs" or strikes. American citizens 18 or over are eligible. Our 64-page booklet contains list of positions, requirements, etc., and tells how you can prepare for "Exams" under the personal supervision of a former U. S. Civil Service Secretary-Examiner. Booklet is **FREE**, without obligation. Write to-day.

PATTERSON CIVIL SERVICE SCHOOL
1534 Livingston Bldg. Rochester, N. Y.

UNCLE SAM IS BEST EMPLOYER;

pay is high and sure; hours short; places permanent; promotions regular; vacations with pay; thousands of vacancies; all kinds of pleasant work everywhere; no layoffs; no pull needed; common education sufficient. Special money back guarantee if you write today for booklet B-899. IT IS FREE.

EARL HOPKINS, - - WASHINGTON, D. C.

GET A BETTER PLACE

Don't Grope for Words

We are all trying to SELL something—it may be brains, or automobiles, or soap—but words are the universal medium of exchange. LEARN TO USE THEM CORRECTLY—PROFITABLY. Get a command of English! Spend a few minutes daily with Grenville Kleiser's Mail Course in Practical English and Mental Efficiency. It will surely teach you how to

Use Good English—*and Win*

Enlarge your Stock of Words—Use the Right Word in the Right Place—Write Compelling Business Correspondence, Stories, Advertisements, Speeches—Become an Engaging Conversationalist—Enter good Society, etc.

Ask for free particulars *to-day*. We send them by mail. No agent will call.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY, Dept. 385, NEW YORK, N. Y.

My Magazine "Investing for Profit" FREE for Six Months

Send me your name and address right NOW and I will send you **Investing for Profit** magazine **absolutely free** for six months. It tells how to get the utmost earnings from your money—how to tell good investments—how to pick the most profitable of sound investments. It reveals how bankers and capitalists make **$1,000 grow to $22,000**—in fact gives you the vital investing information that should enable you to **make your money grow proportionately.** I have decided this month to give 500 six month subscriptions to **Investing for Profit FREE!** Every copy is

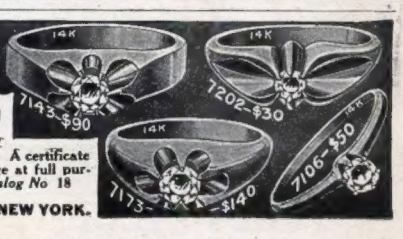
Worth at Least $10

to every investor—perhaps a fortune. Send your name and address now, mention this paper and get a **Free** introductory subscription. Conditions may prevent repeating this offer. Better take it now. You'll be willing to pay 10c a copy after you have read it six months.

H. L. BARBER, Pub., R418 30 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago

DIAMONDS ON CREDIT

20% DOWN 10% A MONTH



The most beautiful Diamonds are the Blue-white, especially if absolutely perfect. LYON DIAMONDS *are 1st Quality, Blue-white.* A certificate furnished with every Diamond guaranteeing its value and providing for exchange at full purchase price. Goods sent prepaid for examination and approval. *Write for Catalog No* 18

10 per cent DISCOUNT FOR CASH

J. M. LYON & CO., (Est'd 1843) 71-73 Nassau St., NEW YORK.

A Big Novel of the Oil Fields **"UNLUCKY MEN"** By George W. Ogden in next issue

VOLUME XXXVII NUMBER 1

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

CONTENTS

JUNE 23, 1915

COVER DESIGN . . . . . **P. V. E. Ivory**

A TWO-SPOT IN THE BIG GAME. A Complete Novel, **Holman Day** . . . 1
The inner workings of the business of steamboating in which young Captain Mayo is enmeshed seemingly beyond redemption.

ART FOR McHENRY'S SAKE. A Short Story, . . **Holworthy Hall** . . 92
Showing how an artist may be capitalized.

FIVE CENTS CHANGE. A Short Story, . . . **Frederick Niven** . . 103
An Indian demonstrates that he can appreciate a man who is white.

CHIROPTERA INSECTIVORA FOR LUCK. A Short Story, **Wilbur Hall** . . . 110
Looking for a mascot that would help win an auto race.

CAUGHT IN THE NET. Editorials, ... **The Editor** . . . 124

THE MAN WHO COULD DO EVERYTHING. . . **Albert Payson Terhune** . 128
A Four-Part Story.
A murder mystery that makes a half dozen persons appear possibly guilty.

DEEGAN'S MOMENT. A Short Story, . . . **H. C. Witwer** . . 160
On the road with a one-night show with the "boomer" playing the "lead."

THE GAMBLER. A Two-part Story, . . . **David A. Curtis** . . 166
Readers will recognize in the author the creator of "Old Man Greenlaw," and this, his first novel, will meet their expectations—perhaps surprise them.

WITH THE AID OF THE "ENGLISH." A Short Story, **N. B. Beasley** . . 196
Baseball is the theme, and there is a decidedly new twist recorded.

THE KIND THAT GETS THERE. A Short Story, . **Robert J. Pearsall** . . 206
Winning a corporal's billet under circumstances that would have daunted any heart save this debonair rookie's.

BEYOND THE THRESHOLD. A Short Story, . . **Joseph Ernest** . . 216
A plunge into the Fourth Dimension where there is neither time nor space.

Twice-a-Month Publication Issued by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. ORMOND G. SMITH and GEORGE C. SMITH, Proprietors. Copyright, 1915, by Street & Smith, New York. Copyright, 1915, by Street & Smith, Great Britain. *All Rights Reserved.* Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this Magazine either wholly or in part. Entered at New York Post Office as Second-class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $3.72. Foreign, $4.44.

WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you. Complaints are daily made by persons who have been thus victimized.

IMPORTANT—Authors, agents and publishers are requested to note that this firm does not hold itself responsible for loss of unsolicited manuscripts while at this office or in transit; and that it cannot undertake to hold uncalled for manuscripts for a longer period than six months. If the return of manuscripts is expected, postage should be enclosed.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION $3.00 SINGLE COPIES 15 Cents

THE NEXT POPULAR ON SALE JULY 7th

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Agents & Help Wanted

I MADE $50,000 in five years with a small mail order business; began with $5. Send for free booklet. Tells how. Heacock, Box 717, Lockport, New York.

FREE to any woman. Beautiful 42-piece dinner set for distributing only 3 dozen cakes of Complexion Soap Free. No money or experience needed. R. Tyrrell Ward, 224 Institute Place, Chicago.

AGENTS—The biggest seller out. Beer in concentrated form; a good glass wanted by everybody; so convenient, so cheap; show it, sell them all; carry right in your pocket; enormous demand, big profits; send no money; just a postal for free sample proposition. The Ambrew Co., Dept. 2162, Cincinnati, O.

AGENTS—SOMETHING NEW—FASTEST SELLERS and quickest repeaters on earth. Permanent, profitable business. Good for $50 to $75 a week. Address, American Products Co., 699 Third Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

MEN OF IDEAS and inventive ability. New list of "Needed Inventions," "Patent Buyers," and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Randolph & Co., Dept. 63, Wash., D. C.

AGENTS, $25 a week for 2 hours work a day. A brand new hosiery proposition; beats them all. Write for terms and free sample if you mean business. Guaranteed Hosiery Company, 1060 Third St., Dayton, O.

$250 FOR RELIABLE MAN OR WOMAN; distribute 2000 free packages Borax Powder with Soaps, etc., in your town. No money or experience needed. R. Ward Co., 224 Institute, Chicago.

Business Opportunities

FREE FOR SIX MONTHS.—My Special offer to introduce my magazine "Investing for Profit." It is worth $10 a copy to anyone who has been getting poorer while the rich, richer. It demonstrates the real earning power of money and shows how anyone, no matter how poor, Can acquire riches. Investing for Profit is the only progressive financial journal published. It shows how $100 grows to $2,200. Write Now and I'll send it six months free. H. L. Barber, 407, 20 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago.

Motion Picture Plays

I guarantee $10 for first Photo Play you write by my method. Obtain free booklet "How To Write Photo Plays." Elbert Moore, Box 772 H T, Chicago.

WRITE Moving Picture Plays: $50 each; all or spare time; correspondence course unnecessary: details free. Atlas Pub. Co., 313 Atlas Bldg., Cin., O.

WE ACCEPT Mss. in any form; criticise free; sell on commission. Details free. Story Rev. Co., 11 Main, Smethport, Pa.

Pianos

USED PIANO BARGAINS from $75 up to $195. All standard makes, including Steinway, Knabe, Emerson, Kimball, taken in exchange on new Starck Pianos and Player-Pianos. Also second-hand Player-Pianos from $195 to $345. 30 days' free trial. Lowest payments. 50 music lessons Free. Write quick for bargain list. P. A. Starck Piano Company, 126 Starck Building, Chicago, Ill.

Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS, TRADE-MARKS. Send for my free book "How To Get Them." It's full of information you should know. Joshua R. H. Potts, 8 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, 805 G. St., Washington.

IDEAS WANTED—Manufacturers are writing for patents procured through me. 3 books with list 200 inventions wanted sent free. Advice free. I get patent or no fee. R. B. Owen, 39 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C.

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. Guide Book and What to Invent, with valuable List of Inventions Wanted, sent free. One Million Dollars offered for one Invention. Patents secured by us advertised free in World's Progress, sample free. Victor J. Evans & Co., 767 Ninth Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS, Trade-Marks and Copyrights. Our handbook on patents will be sent free on request. All patents secured through us are described without cost to the patentee in the Scientific American. Munn & Co., Patent Attorneys, 682 Woolworth Bldg., N.Y. Washington, D. C., Office, 625 F St.

Music and Song Poems

SONG poems wanted for publication. Past experience unnecessary. Our proposition positively unequalled. Send us your song poems or melodies today or write for instructive booklet—it's free. Marks-Goldsmith Co., Dept. 15, Washington, D. C.

Secure A Good Government Position

Write today for **The Civil Service Book** which tells how the I. C. S. can train you at home and in your spare time for any Civil Service examination. The book is free. Writing for it places you under no obligation. If you are an American over 18 and can read and write, the way to U. S. Government positions is open to you. Send for the book and learn how the I. C. S. can help you. Over 700 persons secured positions in the U. S. C. S. last year through I. C. S. training.

International Correspondence Schools
Box 8550 Scranton, Pa.

100 PAGE BOOK FREE

Will gladly send new **illustrated book,** postpaid. Tells how to quickly, easily learn ladies', children's **hairdressing,** (marcel and other modes), **shampooing,** stopping **loss of hair,** scalp treatment, removal of superfluous hair by electricity, reducing **double chins,** manicuring, **face massage,** beauty culture, how to make cold creams, lotions, etc., at home. Many women are earning **$15 to $50 weekly.** I teach all by correspondence. Address: **ELIZABETH KING, 247 C, Station F, NEW YORK CITY.**

Amazing Bargains

Write today for our latest bulletin. Shows hundreds of remarkable bargains in diamonds and other jewelry. Our customers letters show as much and more than

1/2 Saved

on gorgeous gems, watches, etc. **Diamond Banking** our Business. Exquisite jewelry on which we loaned money. You get the benefit—astounding unpaid loan prices. Write for bulletin.

Free Examination See any of our offerings before you buy. We pay express.

Money-Back Guarantees by a firm of over 60 years, rated over $750,000.00. Reference by permission Farmer's Deposit Bank, Marine National Bank.

Write Today No obligations. Get our latest bulletin. It's free.

Jos. DeRoy & Sons *Only Opposite Post Office*
812 DeRoy Building - Pittsburgh, Pa.

Only $7.85

No. 324587. ¼—¼ kt. dazzling brilliant fine quality blue-white solitaire genuine diamond in 14-kt. gold scarf pin or lady's ring. Try to match at $20. **Unpaid Loan Price, $7.85.** Other Unpaid Loan genuine diamonds $2.90 to $950.

AGENTS

ROAD TO WEALTH

MAKE BIG MONEY

SOMETHING NEW! Exciting business for agents. Sell 'AMBREW'—a concentrated beer made of Barley Malt and Hops—just add water. Pure Lager Beer with snap and sparkle, topped with rich creamy foam. Made in a few minutes at home, anywhere—1 cent a glass. Guaranteed under the U. S. Pure Food Laws. Can be sold everywhere, wet or dry. Guaranteed strictly legitimate. No license required. Everybody buys, big repeater. 100 per cent profit. Small, compact, carry the beer in concentrated form in your pocket and supply the enormous demand. Innis sold 3000; Dickinson 500; Johnson made $110, says: "Sells like wildfire." Others coining money. $6 to $12 day. Territory being snapped up—all or spare time. How to get free sample. BE QUICK. JUST A POSTAL TODAY FOR FREE BOOKLET "SECRETS OF MAKING BEER AT HOME" AND 30 DAY TRIAL OFFER.

THE AMBREW CO. Dept. 2309. CINCINNATI, OHIO

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXVII. JUNE 23, 1915. No. 1.

A Two-Spot in the Big Game

By Holman Day

Author of "The Red Lane," "Yankee Grit," Etc.

The business of steamboating. A peep at the inner workings of a big enterprise controlled by the financial kings. As old Captain Jacobs puts it: "They seem to be running steamboat lines from Wall Street nowadays, instead of from the water front; there is nothing to be said by the man in the pilot house." New blood is demanded. Fresh vigor is needed. Years of faithful service on the part of old skippers count for nothing. Heads are chopped ruthlessly. The old and the cautious are sacrificed; the cry is for the young and impetuous who pay no attention to the slogan, "Safety first." In the shake-up of one line of ships young Captain Mayo gets his chance. It looks like a chance to do big things, but he finds he is only a two-spot in a very big game.

(A Book-length Novel)

CHAPTER I.

THE RULES OF THE ROAD—FROM TWO ANGLES.

THAT age-seasoned veteran of the Vose line, the single-screw freighter, *Nequasset*, walloped laboriously up coast through the dungeon fog.

She was, as usual, minding her own business and observing the rules of the road as laid down by the department of commerce and labor. Such was the obedient spirit of her grizzled master, Captain Zoradus Wass.

The needle of her indicator marked "Half Speed," and it really meant half speed. There was no tricky slipping over—no finger-at-nose connivance between the pilot house and the chief engineer's grille platform. Captain Wass was not that kind of a man, although the dungeon fog had hung in front of him for two days, vapor as thick as feathers in a tick, and he had averaged barely six miles an hour, and the rate on steel rails was down to fifty-five cents a ton, on account of the general unjointing of traffic wrought by the war. And he was reflecting irefully that expenses kept up even if the freight tariff did not, because a crew in these halcyon days of labor organization demands and receives fresh meat and all the fixings three times a day—and everybody knows what fresh meat costs!

"At fifty-five cents, there's about as

much profit for us as there would be in swapping a hard dollar from one hand to the other, and depending on what silver you could rub off," said Captain Wass to Stanley Mayo, his young first mate. "And it's tough times along coast when a cargo carrier has to figger so fine that she loses money on account of what grub the men eat because we're two days late, minding rules in a fog. This kind of business don't need steamboat men any longer —it calls for boarding-house keepers, who know how to turn sharp corners on left-overs and can cut sirloin steak clear to the horn. Swapping a hard dollar from one hand to the other—that's it!"

A glance at Captain Wass' hard and raspy palms might have suggested that he could do a little better than the usual person at taking toll from silver dollars in that fashion. One of those palms grasped the whistle pull and held its clutch there constantly. Regularly every minute *Nequasset's* prolonged blast sounded, as the regulations provide. The freighter's voice started with a sort of querulous squawk—uncertainly, like an old man's tones, was full-voiced for a moment, and trailed off into more querulousness. It was a crotchety whistle. It seemed to fit the looks of the steamer—to suit Captain Wass' general state of mind.

As a matter of fact, Captain Wass and his boat seemed to carry a real family resemblance to each other, if such can be asserted of man and craft. The captain was broad-bowed, he sagged on short legs as if he carried a cargo fully as heavy as steel rails, and his white whiskers streamed away from his cutwater nose like the froth kicked up by old *Nequasset's* forefoot.

He chewed slowly, conscientiously, continuously on tobacco which bulged in his cheek; his ruminating jaws, moving steady as a pendulum, seemed to set the time for the isochronal blast; he expectorated forth into the fog and then pulled the whistle, and the minute's lapse was correct, almost to the tick of a second.

The windows of the pilot house were dropped into their casings so that all sounds might be admitted; the wet breeze beaded the captain's whiskers and dampened the young mate's crisp, brown hair. Captain Wass gave Mayo a critical going-over with his gaze while the mate leaned from a window, his ear cocked for signals in that white void. Sun and wind and spray had tanned the young man's skin, but the color made only more attractive the pink glow of health and the hue of clean living.

"I'm thinking of a good job for you when this one plays out—and it looks like it would push out mighty soon if freights don't come up and them European tomcats don't stop clawing," suggested Captain Wass.

The mate pulled in his head and turned inquiring eyes on his superior. The eyes were luminous and gray, and there was a smile in them; the mate knew the dry tones of Captain Wass' caustic humor, and was ready to anticipate the jocularity.

"You'd better try to get a job, say, on one of the Union liners. A job, of course, where you can wear a uniform. You'd make a mighty slick-looking chap with plenty of gold braid on."

The quartermaster at the wheel grinned approvingly.

"Be a purser on one of John Adams Marston's skyhooting steamers, if you can't get any higher job. Be anything on a steamer where the tony folks travel and where you can wear gilt. A chap with your looks can catch an heiress. You might even be able to catch John Adams Marston's daughter, herself."

"I've heard that the proper way to catch heiresses is to be a chauffeur," said Mayo, showing his even teeth in a smile, modestly tolerating this rather pointed pleasantry.

"Oh, that's old-fashioned—it's getting played out. Furthermore, no rich man would hire you for his daughter's chauffeur unless he was blind. You're too good looking, son."

"Thank you," said Mate Mayo. "And what's the rest of the joke?"

"I never joke," affirmed the captain, after he had pulled the whistle and had allowed *Nequasset's* despondent squall to die down in her brazen throat. "I'll bet ye that even John Marston's girl would take you, if you could sidle up to her right, having on a real genteel uniform. Then John might give you his job of managing all the best steamboats on the coast. Her name is Alma. I got a peek at her once. She's a clipper of a girl. Probably she travels on John Marston's steamboats. That will give you your chance to come up to her on the blind side of Father John. Better try it. Then when you get to be manager you can work me into a good job."

"Very well, sir," answered Mate Mayo, with gravity that carried on the jest. "It's only right for me to turn around and help you, Captain Wass, seeing that you have trained me up till I'm on the way to get a master's license next week. I'll hate to lay that away while I serve as a purser, but orders from you must be obeyed, sir."

He saluted and put his head out of the window.

Captain Wass winked at the quartermaster.

"But at that, even if it did come to me all of a sudden, it ain't such a hooting bad idea," muttered the captain, sotto voce.

He spat against the wall of the fog, and again let loose from the whistle *Nequasset's* hoarse lament.

From somewhere, ahead, a horn wailed, dividing its call into two blasts.

"Port tack and headed across us," averred the captain, after a sniff at the sluggish stir of breeze. "Why ain't the cussed fool anchored, instead of drifting around underfoot? How does he bear, Mr. Mayo?"

"Two points and a half, starboard bow, sir. And there's another chap giving one horn in almost the same direction."

"Another drifter—not wind enough so that they know what tack they're really on. Well, there's always article twenty-seven to fall back on," stated the captain, quoting sarcastically in the tone in which that rule is mouthed so often in pilot houses along coast: "'Due regard shall be had to all dangers of navigation and collision, and to any special circumstances which may render a departure from the above rules necessary,' and so forth and et cetera. Meaning, thank the Lord, and I hope the secretary of the bureau of commerce will agree with me if it ever comes to a showdown, that a steamer can always run away from a schooner, even at half speed. Ease her off to starboard four points till we bring 'em abeam, Mr. Mayo."

The mate gave a quick glance at the compass.

"East nothe east by east, Mr. Tidd."

"East nothe east by east, sir," repeated the quartermaster, in mechanical tones, spinning the big wheel to the left.

It was evident that *Nequasset* had considerable company on the sea that day. A little abaft the beam a tug was blowing one long and two short, indicating her tow. She had been their "chum" for some time, and was moving north in a parallel course. The mate had occasionally taken her bearings by compass, judging her position by the whistle, and knew that the freighter was forging ahead. Similar attention, now, to the horns of the sailing vessels showed him that the steamer stood on a course to clear them.

"You take a skipper who studies his book and is always ready to look the department in the eye, without flinch-

ing, he has to mind his own business and mind the other fellow's for him," grumbled Captain Wass. "Dodging here and there, keeping out of the way, two days behind schedule, meat three times a day, and everybody hearty at mealtime. You'd better hunt up that dude job and catch an heiress, Mr. Mayo. My owners haven't told me yet to let the law go to blazes and ram her for all she is worth, fog or no fog, but by the way they look at me when I carry in my accounts and requisitions, I can plainly see that they are trying to think up the special kind of language that tells a man to do a thing and yet doesn't tell him. The language that is like this secret ink—is there when it's wanted to show, and isn't there otherwise. What's that?" He put his head far out of the window.

Floating out of the fog came a dull, grunting sound, a faint and far-away diapason, a marine whistle which signified by its depth of volume, distant as it was, a craft of huge size.

"I should say it is a Union liner—either the *Triton* or the *Neptune,* sir," ventured the mate. "I think I can name her the next time she blows."

They listened.

They waited two long minutes for another warning signal.

"He's taking up all his full legal time," growled Captain Wass. "He hates to waste any of his steam in tooting, probably. Maybe John Marston has put on a special register to keep tabs on steam used for tooting. Expects us little fellows to do the squawking, like hens in front of an automobile. Dividends is what the Union line is after."

The big whistle boomed again, dead ahead, and so much nearer that Captain Wass clucked a sea oath.

"He's reeling off all of eighteen knots for a gait, or you can use my head for a rivet nut!"

His own whistle squalled with choleric timbre.

The other chap replied with bellowing, throbbing roar which seemed to shake the curtains of the mist. The sound was loud, startlingly nearer, autocratic, domineering.

Captain Wass' tone was pitched in his nose-expressing sarcasm—when he spoke.

"And now it's article sixteen which seems to apply to the special case of *Nequasset,* with others doing just as they blasted please," raved the veteran master. "'A steam vessel hearing apparently forward of her beam the fog signal of a vessel the position of which is not ascertained shall, so far as the circumstances of the case will admit, stop her engines and then navigate with caution until danger of collision is over.'"

He did not recite this rule with the tone of a man imparting instruction or refreshing his own recollection. There was no need of such instruction in the pilot house of old *Nequasset.* He spoke the words with irony and vindictiveness, calling ireful attention to the lawlessness of another man. And with those words of the pilot rules he made pointedly plain his own rectitude.

Captain Wass hooked a gnarled finger into the loop of the bell pull and yanked upward. A dull clang sounded far below. He pulled again, and the vibration of the engine ceased.

"Gad rabbit it, I'll go the whole hog as the department orders," he snapped. "If he bangs into me we'll see who comes off best at the hearing and investigation."

He gave the bell loop two quick jerks; then he shifted his hand to another pull, and the jingle bell sounded in the engine room. The freighter shook and shivered when the screw began to reverse, pulling at the sea, clawing frantically to haul her down

to a stop. The captain then gave three resentful, protesting whistle blasts.

But the reply he got from ahead was a hoarse, loud, prolonged howl. There was no hint that the big fellow was heeding the protest of the three blasts. It was the contemptuousness of ocean braggadocio, the insolence of the swaggering express liner making her time against her rivals; it was implied assurance that little fellows would get out of the way.

In fact, Captain Wass had docilely signaled that he was going full speed astern, thus stepping off the sidewalk of the ocean lane, giving the swaggerer the right of way, as usual. He had done it many times before, the other small fellows had done it—cursing all the while—but, nevertheless, they had done it! And the big chaps knew that the little ones would do it. For in spite of all the laws, powerful folk are likely to keep on doing illegal things when they find that they keep getting away with it without harm to themselves.

Mate Mayo leaned from the window, his jaw muscles tense, anxiety in his eyes.

"It's a damnable thing to admit, but something bad has got to happen before this thing will be stopped on the coast, sir," he informed Captain Wass.

"You can't go to the inspectors with the story of a close call, Mr. Mayo. And if I report this case, then that Union-liner man will probably say he thought my three whistles were a salute to the last ten-per-cent dividend or to John Marston's birthday or something else."

Fogs are freaky, ocean mists are eerie in methods and movements. There are strata, there are eddying air currents which rend the curtain or shred the thickness momentarily, or for a little area.

They in the pilot house of the freighter suddenly found their range of vision widened. The fog did not clear. It became more tenuous. It was like a thin veil which disclosed dimly what it distorted and magnified.

In a fog practiced steamboat men look sharply ahead at the place where fog and the ocean merge. They do not stare up into the fog, trying to mark the loom of a craft; they are able to discern first of all the white line of foam marking the vessel's cutwater kick-up, or her wake.

"There she comes, sir," advised the mate. He pointed his finger. There was a white upthrust of tossing water.

"Yes, by gad, eighteen knots and both eyes shut!" yelped Captain Wass.

And then all three men in the freighter's conning tower gave voice in concert to angry alarm. They were not concerned for their own safety. Their quick eyes had informed them that the giant liner was threshing down on an angle of at least two points' divergence from the freighter's course. She would pass the stationary *Nequasset* well to starboard. But right in line with the foaming bow was a fisherman's Hampton boat, now disclosed as the drifting fog was swept away for a little space.

The passenger boat "woofed" a half dozen short notes, but she gave no signs of slowing. That they were making an attempt to dodge the mite in their path was made known by a shout from the lookout, and his shrill cry of "Port—hard over!" was echoed loud enough in the liner's pilot house for Captain Wass and his men to hear.

The fisherman had all the alertness of his ilk, trained by dangers and mischance to grab at desperate chances. He leaped and pulled out his mast and tossed mast and sail overboard. He had seen that he must encounter the tremendous wash and wake of the rushing hull.

His shell of a boat, made top-heavy

by the sail, would have stood small show.

"He's a goner," gasped Captain Wass. "She's a-going to tramp him plumb underfoot—unless she means to get up a little more speed and jump over him," he added, his honest fright prompting bitter sarcasm.

They saw the little boat go into eclipse behind the black prow, the first lift of the churning waters flickering the cockleshell; it rose as a feather is blown by a gust. The fisherman had thrown himself flat.

"He's under for keeps," mourned Captain Wass. "If her bilge keel doesn't fetch him, her port propeller will. There's an awful wallop under her counter!"

So rapidly was the liner moving, so sudden her swoop to the right, that she leaned far over and showed to them the red of her huge bilge. Her high speed enabled her to make a quick turn. As they stared, her stacks swung almost into line. Her shearing prow menaced them.

"The condemned old hellion is going to nail *us,* now!" shouted Captain Wass.

She was almost upon them—only a few hundred yards of gray water separated the two steamers. She was the *Triton.* Her name was disclosed on her bow. Her red hawse holes showed like glowering, savage eyes. There was indescribable brutal menace in this sudden dart in their direction. She seemed like a sea monster who had gulped an insect in the shape of a Hampton boat, and now was seeking a real mouthful. But the great wheel was spinning in her pilot house, and once again she sheered, cutting a letter S, which brought her past the stern of *Nequasset* a biscuit toss distant. The mighty surge of her rushing passage lifted the freighter's bulk aft, and the huge wave that was crowded between the two hulls crowned itself with frothing white and slapped a good ton of water over the smaller steamer's superstructure.

Captain Wass grabbed down his megaphone. Remarks which he wished to submit regarding that incident were crowding in his throat.

But the captain of the *Triton* was beforehand with a celerity which matched the speed of his craft. He was bellowing through the huge funnel a quartermaster was holding for him. His language was terrific. He cursed freighters, seriatim and in toto. He asked with oaths why *Nequasset* was loafing there, without headway on her —headway so that she could keep out from underfoot. That amazing inquiry took away Captain Wass' breath and power of retort. That was the height of unjust insolence. Asking that question of a man who had obeyed the rules to the letter! A man banging through the sea at eighteen knots in a fog asking a careful skipper why that conscientious gentleman had stopped so as to get out of the way! Going so fast when he asked the question that he was out of earshot before suitable reply could be addressed to him!

Revolving those whirling thoughts in a flaming brain, Captain Zoradus Wass banged his megaphone across the pilot house, kicked it into a corner when it rebounded against him, and began to whack his fist against a broad placard that was tacked under his license as shipmaster. The cardboard was fresh and white, and the tacks were bright, showing that it was a new adornment of the pilot house. Big letters in red ink at the top counseled "Safety First." Other big letters at the bottom advised, "Take No Chances." The center lettering warned masters that in case of accident the guilty parties would feel all the weight of Uncle Sam's heavy palm —it was the latest and freshest output from the department of commerce and labor, and bore the signature of the honorable secretary of the bureau.

Mate Mayo, viewing his chief's speechless absorption, pulled the bells to check the backward churning, and sent the freighter on her way.

He had noted that the fisherman had emerged from his eclipse safely, and was bailing his boat.

"That was a close call all around, sir," he suggested to the infuriated captain, with gravity, "and I'm glad I have been trained by a master who doesn't take chances."

"And where have I got to by obeying the United States rules and never taking chances? At sixty-five I'm earning about that many dollars a month aboard this old freight scow, sassed by owners when I'm ashore, and sassed by the hell-bent fellows when I'm at sea. If that passenger steamer had hit me just now, the case would have been walloped around so that the tar end of the stick would be shoved into my hand. I wouldn't wonder a mite if he lodges complaint against me in New York when he gets there this trip. And then when something really does happen on this coast, the I-told-you boys will have the poultice all made and heated to slap onto the old-fashioned skippers. Son, if you have made up your mind to stay an old-fashioned skipper, you'd better take another think. Go hunt up that heiress. Go get a job on one of them wowhoopuses, such as just slammed past here."

And Mate Mayo, having more of the straightforward-sailor spirit in himself than he had of the instinct of the prophet, told Captain Wass, with a smile, that he "guessed he would stay where he was put."

And yet, as they went wallowing up the coast, their ancient tub sagging with the weight of the rails in her swashing insides, Mate Mayo felt considerable of a young man's ambitious envy of that spick-and-span swaggerer who had yelled anathema from the pilot house of the *Triton*. That was real steamboating, he reflected, even if the demands of owners and dividend seekers did oblige a skipper to take his luck between his teeth and gallop down the seas.

CHAPTER II.

MILLIONS AND A GIRL.

Mr. Ralph Bradish, using one of the booth telephones in the Wall Street offices of Marston & Waller, asked the cashier of an uptown restaurant, as a special favor, to hold for twenty-four hours the check for twenty-five dollars given by Mr. Bradish the evening before.

Ten minutes later, with the utmost nonchalance and quite certain that the document was as good as wheat, Mr. Bradish signed a check for one million, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

That amount in no measure astonished him. He was quite used to signing smashing big checks when he was called into the presence of John Adams Marston. Once, the amount named was two millions. And there had been numbers and numbers of what Mr. Bradish mentally termed "piker checks"—a hundred thousand, two and three hundred thousand. And he had never been obliged to request any hold up on those checks for want of funds. Because, in each instance, there had been a magic, printed line along which Mr. Bradish had splashed his signature.

Before he blotted the ink on this check, Bradish glanced, with only idle curiosity, to note in what capacity he was serving this time. The printed line announced to him that he was "Treasurer, the Paramount Coast Transportation Company, Inc." He remembered that in the past he had signed as treasurer of the "Union Securities Company," the "Amalgamated Holding Company" and for other corporations having to do with railroads and big industries with whose destinies John Adams Marston, financier, appeared to

have much to do. It was evident that Financier Marston preferred to have a forty-dollar a week clerk do the menial work of check signing, or at least to have that clerk's name appear instead of Marston's own.

That modesty about having his name appear in public on a check seemed to attach to the general habits of Mr. Marston.

Mighty few persons were ever admitted to this inner sanctuary where Bradish sat facing his employer across the massive flat-topped desk. And men who saw that employer outside his office did not turn their heads to stare after him or point respectful finger at him or remark to somebody else, "There's the big John Adams Marston." In the first place, Mr. Marston was not big in a physical sense, and there was nothing about him which would attract attention or cause him to be remarked in a crowd. And only a few persons really knew him, anyway.

He sat in his big chair, one hand propped on the arm, his elbow akimbo, and with the other hand plucked slowly at the narrow strip of beard which extended from his lower lip to the peaked end of his chin.

"Very well, Mr. Bradish," he remarked, after the latter had lifted the blotter from the check.

Bradish rose and bowed and started to leave.

He was a tall and shapely young man —with a waist—with a carriage. His garb was up-to-the-minute fashion—repressed. He was a study in brown, as to fabric of attire and accessories. One of those white-faced chaps who always look a bit bored, with a touch of up-to-date cynicism! One of those fellows who listen much and who say little!

"Just a moment, Bradish," invited Marston, and the young man stopped.

"I like your way in these matters. You don't ask questions. You show no silly interest in any check you sign."

Bradish reflected an instant on the check in the restaurant cashier's drawer and pinched his thin lips a little more tightly.

"I'm quite sure you don't do any broadcast talking about the nature of these special duties." The financier pointed to the check. "I'll say quite frankly that I didn't select you for this service until I had ascertained that you did no talking about your own affairs in the office with my other clerks."

Bradish inclined his head respectfully.

"In financial matters it is necessary to pick men carefully. I trust you understand my attitude. These transactions are quite legitimate. But modern methods of high finance make it necessary to manipulate the details a little. Your attitude in accepting these duties as a matter of course is very gratifying from a business standpoint. As a little mark of our confidence in you, you will receive seventy-five dollars per week hereafter."

"Thank you."

Mr. Marston allowed himself a quick, dry smile.

"This isn't a bribe, you understand. There is nothing attached to this nominal service which requires bribing. We merely want to make it worth while for a prudent and close-mouthed young man to remain with us."

A buzzer, as unobtrusive as were all the characteristics of Financier Marston, sounded a meek pur.

"Yes," he murmured into the receiver of the telephone which communicated with the watchful picket of the Marston & Waller offices. "Who? Oh, she may come in at once.

"Wait here a moment, if you please, Mr. Bradish. It is my daughter who has dropped in for a moment's word with me. I have something more for you to attend to."

Bradish walked to one of the windows.

He stared sharply at the girl who hurried in. Her hat and face were shrouded in an automobile veil, and the cloistered light of the big room helped to conceal her features. But Bradish seemed to recognize something about her in spite of the vagueness of outline. When she spoke to her father the young man snapped his eyes in true astonishment.

"I couldn't explain it very well over the telephone, papa, so I came right down. Do forgive me if I bother you for just a minute."

She glanced quickly at the young man beside the window, but found him merely an outline against the light.

"Only one of our clerks," said her father. "What is it, my girl?"

"It's Nan Burgess' house party at Kingston! Mamma is perfectly willing I should go. But there's to be an automobile parade—all decorated—at the fête, and I want to go in our big car, and have it two days. I was afraid you'd say no if I asked you over the telephone, but now that I'm right here, looking you in the eyes with all the coaxing power of my soul, you just can't refuse, can you, papa?"

"I think perhaps I would have consented over the telephone, Alma."

"Then I may take the car?" Her playful tones rose in ecstatic crescendo. The impulsiveness of her nature was displayed by her manner in accepting this favor. She danced to her father and threw her arms about him. She exhibited as much delight as if he had bestowed upon her a gift of priceless pearls. The exuberance of her joy appeared to annoy him a bit.

"Gently, gently, Alma! If you waste your thanks in this manner for a little favor, what will you do some day for superlatives when you are really eager to thank somebody for a big gift?"

"Oh, I'll always have thanks enough to go around—that's my disposition. The folks who love me, I can love them twice as much. You're a dear old dad, and I know you want me to run along so that you can go to making a lot more money. So I'll just take myself out from underfoot."

When she turned, she glanced again at the person near the window, and this time she got a good look at his face.

Even the veil could not hide from Bradish the flame which spread into her cheeks.

She was so conscious of her embarrassment and of her appearance that she did not turn her face to her father when he spoke to her.

"One moment, Alma! Seeing that my big car is going to have a two days' vacation in the country, I may as well make it do one last business errand for me."

He called Bradish to the desk by a side jerk of the head.

"I want that check put into the hands of the brokerage firm of Mower Brothers as quickly as possible. My car is right at the door, and it may as well take you along. Alma, allow this young man of ours to ride with you to the place where I'm sending him."

He did not present Bradish to Miss Marston. Bradish did not expect the financier to do so. But this dismissal of him as a mere errand boy—with the young lady staring him out of countenance in a half-frightened way—did cut the pride a bit, even in the case of a mere clerk. And this clerk was pondering on the memory that only the night before he had clasped this young lady—then a pretty unknown who was evidently bent upon an escapade incog—had encircled this selfsame, delicious maiden with his arms during many blissful dances in one of the gorgeous Broadway public ballrooms. And he had regaled her and a girl friend on viands which his twenty-five-dollar check had scarcely sufficed to pay for.

Bradish was pretty familiar with the phases and the oddities of the dancing craze, but this contretemps rather staggered him.

They had asked no questions of each other during those dances. They had been perfectly satisfied with the joy of the moment. She had looked at him in a way and with a softness in her eyes which told him that she found him pleasing in her sight. She had been enthusiastic—with that same exuberance he had just witnessed—over his grace in the dance. They had promised to meet again at the ballroom, where social conventions did not prevent healthy young folks from enjoying themselves.

"Good heavens!" she whispered to him, as she preceded him through the door. "You work in my father's office?"

"You are surprised—a little shocked—and I don't blame you," he returned humbly. "As for me, I am simply astounded. But I am not a gossip."

She stole a look at his pale, impassive face, and some of her father's instinct in judging men seemed to reassure her.

"One must play a bit," she sighed. "And it's so stupid most of the time among folks whom one knows very well. There are no more surprises."

As he shut the door softly behind them, Bradish heard Marston, once more immersed in his affairs of business, directing over the telephone that one Fletcher Fogg be located and sent to him.

"I apologize," said Bradish, in the corridor. They were waiting for the elevator.

"For what?" She lifted her eyebrows, and there was no hint of annoyance in her dark eyes.

"For—well—seeing how the matter stands, it almost seems as if I had presumed—was masquerading. I am only a clerk, and——"

"But you are a clerk in John Adams Marston's offices," she said, with pride, "and that means that you are to be trusted. I require no apology from you, Mr.—er——"

"My name is Ralph Bradish."

"I dodged away from dullness last evening; I was hoping to have a bit of a frolic. And I found a young gentleman who asked no impertinent questions, who was very gracious, and who was a delight in the dance. It was all very innocent—rather imprudent—but altogether lovely. There!"

"I thank you."

"And—well, after Nan Burgess' house party, I——"

She glanced up at him, provocation in her eyes.

"But I don't dare to hope, do I, that you will condescend to come again and dance with me?"

"John Marston has taught his daughter to keep her promise, sir. If I remember, I promised."

He did not reply, for the elevator's grille door clashed open for them to enter.

And in the elevator and in the car he was silent, as became the clerk of Marston's offices in the company of Marston's daughter when there were listeners near.

Her eyes gave him distinct approval, and her lips gave him a charming smile, when he alighted at his destination.

Bradish stood for a moment and gazed after the car when it threaded its way into the Broadway traffic.

"She's a flighty, young dame, with a new notion for every minute," he told himself. "You can see that plain enough. It's probably all jolly on her part. However, in these days, if a fellow keeps his head steady and his feet busy, there's no telling what the tango may lead to. This may be exactly what I've been paying tailor's bills for."

Indicating that in these calculating times the ardor of love at first sight

is not as the poet of romance has painted it.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH DETAILS ARE LEFT TO MR. FOGG.

Mr. Fletcher Fogg privately and mentally and metaphorically slapped himself on the back whenever he considered his many activities.

He was perfectly certain that he was the best, little, two-handed general operator of an all-around character that any gentleman could secure when that gentleman wanted a job done, and did not care to give explicit instructions as to the details of procedure.

The look of grief and regret that the fat face of Mr. Fogg could assume when said gentleman—after the job was done—blamed the methods as unsanctioned, even though the result had been achieved—that expression was a study in humility—humility with its tongue in its cheek.

If Mr. Fogg could have advertised his business to suit himself—being not a whit ashamed of his tactics—he would have issued a card inscribed about as follows:

"Mr. Fletcher Foggs: Promoting and demoting. Building and busting. The whole inside of any financial or industrial cheese cleaned out without disturbing the outside rind. All still work done noiselessly. Plenty of brass bands for loud work. Broad shoulders supplied to take on all the blame."

Mr. Fogg, in the presence of John Marston, was properly obsequious, but not a bit fawning. He wiped away the moisture patches beside his nose with a purple handkerchief, and put it back into his outside breast pocket, with the corners sticking out like attentive ears. He crossed his legs and set on his knee an ankle clothed in a purple silk stocking. On account of his rotundity, he was compelled to hold the ankle in place in the firm clutch of his hand. He settled his purple tie with the other hand.

"I'm glad I was in reach when you wanted me," he assured Mr. Marston. "I'm just in on the *Triton*. And I want to tell you that you're running that steamboat line in the way an American business man wants to have it run. If I had been on any other line, sir, I wouldn't have been here to-day when you were looking for me. Everything else on the coast prowling along half speed, but down slammed the old *Triton,* scattering 'em out from underfoot like an auto going through a flock of chickens, but not a jar or a scrape or a jolt—and into her dock, through two days of thick fog, exactly on the dot. That's the way an American wants to be carried, sir."

"I believe so, Mr. Fogg," agreed John Marston. "And that's why we feel it's going to be a good thing for all the coast lines to be under one management—our management."

"Exactly!"

"It's true progress—true benefit to travelers, stockholders, and all concerned. Consolidation instead of rivalry. I believe in it."

"Exactly!"

"As a broad-gauged business man—big enough to grasp big matters—you have seen how consolidation effects reforms."

"No two ways about it," affirmed Mr. Fogg.

"That was very good missionary work you did in the matter of the Sound & Cape line—very good indeed."

"It's astonishing what high and lofty ideas some stockholders have about properties they're interested in. In financial matters the poorest conclusion a man can draw is that a stock will always continue to pay dividends simply because it always has done so. I had to set off a pretty loud firecracker to wake those Sound & Cape fellows up.

I had to show 'em what damage the new deals and competition and our combination would do to 'em if they kept on sleeping on their stock certificates. Funny how hard it is to pry some folks loose from their par-value notions." Mr. Fogg delivered this little disquisition on the intractability of stockholders with reproachful vigor, staring blandly into the unwinking gaze of Mr. Marston. "I don't want to praise my own humble efforts too much," he went on, "but I truly believe that inside another thirty days the Sound crowd would have been ready to cash in at fifty, in spite of that minority bunch that was hollering for par. That was only a big yawp from a few folks."

"Fifty was a fair price in view of what's ahead in the way of competition, but we have made it a five-eighths proposition in order to clinch the deal promptly. I just sent one of our boys around with the check."

Mr. Fogg beamed. He used his purple handkerchief on his cheeks once more. He allowed to himself a few words of praise:

"They'll understand some day that I saved 'em from a bigger bump. But it's hard to show some people."

"Now, Mr. Fogg, we come to the matter of the Vose line. What's the outlook?"

Mr. Fogg looked sad.

"After two weeks of chasing 'em, I can only say that they're ugly and stubborn, simply blind to their best interests."

"Insist on par, do they?"

"Worse than that. Old Vose and his sons and those old hornbeam directors—retired sea captains, you know, as hard as old turtles—they have taken a stand against consolidation. They belong in the dark ages of business. Old Vose had the impudence to tell me that forming this steamboat combine was a crime, and that he wouldn't be a party to a betrayal of the public. He won't come in—he won't sell—he's going to compete."

Mr. Marston stroked his strip of beard.

"In order for our stock to be what we intend it to be, the Paramount Coast Transportation has got to operate as a complete monopoly, as you understand, Mr. Fogg. A beneficent monopoly—consolidation benefiting all—but nevertheless a monopoly. With one line holding out on us, we've got only a limping proposition."

"Exactly!"

"What are we going to do about the Vose line?"

"Let it compete, sir. We can kill it in the end."

"Possibly—probably. But that plan will not serve, Mr. Fogg."

"It's business."

"But it is not finance. I'm looking at this proposition solely as a financier, Mr. Fogg. I hardly know one end of a steamboat from the other. I'm not interested in rate-cutting problems. I don't know how long it would take to put the Vose line under. But I do know this, as a financier, handling a big deal, that the Paramount stock will not appeal to investors or the bonds to banks unless we can launch our project as a clean, perfect combination, every transportation charter locked up. I handle money, and I know all of money's timidity and all of money's courage. You think the Vose directors are able to hold their stockholders in line, do you?"

Mr. Fogg uncrossed his legs, put both feet on the floor, hooked his hands across his paunch, and gazed up at the ceiling, evidently pondering profoundly.

"I repeat, I'm not viewing this thing as a steamboating proposition, not figuring what kind of tariffs will kill competition," stated Mr. Marston. "I'm not estimating what kind of tariffs will make a profit for the Paramount. I'd

as soon sell sugar over the counter. My associates expect me to make money for them in another way—make it in big lumps and on a quick turn. The Vose line, competing, kills us from the financial viewpoint."

"Exactly!"

There was silence in the room for some time.

"There's never any telling what stockholders will do," remarked Mr. Fogg, his eyes still studying the panels of the ceiling.

Mr. Marston did not dispute that dictum.

His field marshal slowly tipped down his head and gave his superior another of those bland stares.

"So I'll go right ahead and see what they'll do, sir."

He rose and kicked the legs of his trousers down into place.

"You understand that in this affair, as in all matters where you have been employed, there must be absolutely clean work. There must be no comeback. Of course, I have instructed you to this effect regularly, but I wish to have you remember that I have repeated the instructions, sir."

"Exactly!" Mr. Fogg's eyes did not blink.

"You will be prepared to testify to that effect in case the need ever arises."

"Exactly!"

Mr. Fogg delivered that word like a countersign. Into it, in his interviews with John Marston, he put understanding, humility, promise.

"May we expect quick action?" asked the financier. "The thing mustn't hang fire. We have a lot of our nimble money tied up as it is."

"Exactly!" returned Mr. Fogg, on his way to the door. "Quick action it is!"

"This is probably the craziest idea that ever popped into a man's head when that man was sitting in John Marston's office," reflected Mr. Fogg, marching through the anteroom of this temple of finance. "There's one thing about it that's comforting—it won't ever be blamed onto John Marston as any of his getting up. And that's his principal lookout when a deal is on. It seems to be up to me to deliver the goods."

He sat down on a bench in the waiting room and rubbed his knuckles over his forehead.

"Just let me get this thing right end to," he told himself. "How did the idea happen to hit me, anyway? Oh, yes! Old Vose bragging to me that every stockholder in the Vose line was behind him, and that the annual meeting was about to come off, and then I would see what a condemned poor show I stood to get even the toe of my boot into the crack of the company door. He's a Maine corporation. I've known of cases where that fact helped a lot. There are plenty of ifs and buts in this thing, but here goes!"

He applied himself to one of the office telephones, asked for several numbers, one after the other, and put questions with eagerness and rapidity.

The information he received seemed to disturb him considerably. He came out of the booth and scrubbed his cheeks with his purple handkerchief.

"Their annual meeting at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, four hundred miles from here! Well, I suppose I ought to be thankful that it's not being held right now," said Mr. Fogg, determined to fan that one flicker of hope with both wings of his optimism. "But I've got to inform myself sternly that twenty-four hours is almighty scant time for a job of this sort, even when the operator is the little Fogg boy himself. Damme, I haven't come a full, realizing sense yet of all I've got to do and how I'm going to do it."

He hurried out, dove into an elevator, and was shot down to the street.

He was lucky enough to find a taxi at the curb.

"Grand Central," he told the driver. "I've got five dollars that says you can beat the subway express and land me in season for the ten-o'clock limited for Boston."

As soon as it became evident to Mr. Fogg that his driver had seen his duty and was going to it, traffic squad be blowed, the promoter settled back, and his thoughts began to revolve faster than the taxi's wheels.

"It's going to be like the mining camp 'lulu hand,'" was his mental preface to his plans. "It can be played only once in a sitting-in; it has got to be backed with good bluff, but it's a peach when it works. And what am I a promoter for—what have I studied foreign corporation laws for?"

Mr. Fogg took off his hat and mopped his bald spot, wrinkling his eyelids in deep reflection.

"The idea is," he mused, "I'm a candidate for the presidency of the Vose line at to-morrow's meeting. But I haven't been elected yet!"

However, Mr. Fogg's preliminary sniffing at the affairs of the Vose line had informed him where he could pick up at least ten scattered shares of their stock. He figured that before midnight he would have that in his possession. As to the next day and the next steps, well, the nerve of a real American plunger has life until the sunset of all hopes, even as the snake's tail, though the serpent's head be bruised beyond repair, wriggles until the sunset of day.

He dispatched a telegram at New Haven. He received a reply at Providence, and he read it and felt like a gambler who has drawn a card to fill his bobtail hand. When a design is brazen and the game is largely a bluff, plain, lucky chance must be appealed to.

The telegram had been addressed to Attorney Sawyer Franklin, in a Maine city. It had requested an appointment with Mr. Franklin on the following morning.

The reply had stated that Mr. Franklin was critically ill in a hospital, but that all matters of business would be attended to by his office force, as far as was possible.

Attorney Sawyer Franklin, as Mr. Fogg, of course, was fully aware, was clerk of the Vose line corporation, organized according to the Maine law as a "foreign corporation," under the more liberal regulations which have attracted so many metropolitan prompters into the States of Maine and New Jersey.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW AN ANNUAL MEETING WAS HELD—ONCE!

Fletcher Fogg, suave, dignified, radiating business importance, freshened by a barber's ministrations, walked into the Franklin law offices the next morning at nine-thirty.

He announced himself to a girl typist, and she referred him to a young man who came forth from a private room.

"I have power of attorney from Mr. Franklin to transact his routine business," explained the young man. "Of course, if it's a new case or a question of law——"

"Neither, neither, my dear sir! Simply a matter of routine. But," he leaned close to the young man's ear, "strictly private."

Mr. Fogg, himself, closed the door of the inner office when the two had retired there.

"One of your matters to-day, I believe, is the annual meeting of the Vose line. I am a stockholder."

Fogg produced a packet of certificates and laid them on the desk.

"Are there to be any officers or other stockholders present?" he asked, showing just a bit of solicitude in spite of himself.

"I think not," returned the young

man. "Nothing has been said about it. The proxies and instructions have been sent in, as usual, by registered mail."

He indicated documents stacked on the desk.

"I was just about to begin on the matter."

"I suppose our proxies run to the clerk of the corporation, as usual, with full power of substitution, clerk to follow instructions," said Mr. Fogg a bit pompously, using his complete knowledge of corporation routine.

"Yes, sir. We handle most of the corporation meetings that way when it's all cut and dried. In this case, it's simply a reëlection of the old officers."

"Exactly!"

Mr. Fogg pulled his chair closer, dabbed his purple handkerchief on each side of his nose, and inquired kindly and confidentially:

"My son, what's your name?"

"David Boyne."

"Law student here—secretary, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Exactly—and a long, hard pull ahead of you. It's too bad you're not in New York, where a young man doesn't have to travel the whole way around, but can cut a corner or two. I could give you a lot of examples of bright young chaps who have grabbed in when the grabbing was good. But I haven't got the time. You take my word for it. I'm a plain, outspoken business man, and I'm in with the biggest financial interests in New York. And I'm going to offer you the grandest opportunity of your life right now, David."

He picked up his certificates and arranged them in one hand, as a player arranges his cards.

"I have here ten shares, say, and each share is owned by a different individual —all good men. You don't know them, but I do. They are connected with our big interests. And I'm right here as a stockholder. Do you realize, David, that instructing you to hold this meeting without a single stockholder present is really asking you do something that's not strictly legal?"

"We usually do it this way," faltered Boyne.

"Exactly! Men like those who are running the Vose line are always asking an innocent man to do something illegal. I'm going to come right to the point with you, David. Those old mossbacks who have sent those instructions are trying to wreck the Vose line. I want you to disregard those instructions. I am anxious to be president and general manager of the line. I want you to elect as directors these stockholders." He tapped his finger on the certificates.

The young man was both frightened and bewildered. He turned pale.

"I can't do that," he gasped.

"Yes, you can. There are the proxies. It's up to you to vote 'em as you want to. They allow full power of substitution, usual fashion!"

"But I can't disobey my instructions."

"I say you can, if you've got grit enough to make a good thing for yourself."

"Such a thing was never done here."

"Probably not. It's a new idea. But new things are being done right along in high finance. You ought to be up where big things are happening every day. You stand in with me, and I'll put you there. You see, I'm getting right down to cases on this matter with you, David. Vote those proxies as I direct and I'll hand you five thousand dollars inside of two hours, and will plant you in a corking job with my people as soon as this thing calms down. I could have palavered a long time before coming to business in this way, but I see you're a bright young fellow, and don't need a lot of hair-oil talk. I don't ask you to hurt anybody in especial. You can elect the old treas-

urer—we don't want to handle the money. But I want a board of directors who will put me in as general manager until certain reforms can be instituted so as to bring the line up to date. Five thousand dollars, mind you, and then you'll be taken care of."

"But I'll be put into State prison."

"Nonsense, my boy! Why would you vote those proxies according to your instructions? Why, because it would be for your interest to do so if I hadn't come in here with a better proposition. Now it's for your interest to vote 'em as I tell you. The most they can make out of it is a breach of trust, and that amounts to nothing. And with five thousand dollars in your mitt, you wouldn't need to hang around here to take a lot of slurs. I'll slip you another thousand for your expenses on a little trip, till the air is all clear."

Boyne stared at this blunt and forceful tempter; his hands which clutched the chair arms trembled.

"I'm going to be still more frank with you, my boy. And, by the way, you must know I'm no mere four-flusher. You've heard of Fletcher Fogg, eh? You knew who I was when you got that wire from me yesterday?"

"Why, yes, I know of you through our corporation work, sir."

"Exactly."

Mr. Fogg assumed even more unctuously the manner of an old friend.

"Now, as I say, I'm going to be frank—take you in on the ground floor. Of course, they can have another—a special meeting of the Vose line after a thirty days' notice to the stockholders. They will probably call that meeting, and I don't care if they do. But I have an ambition to be general manager of the line for those thirty days to make—well, I want to make a little investigation of general conditions," declared Mr. Fogg, resorting to his purple handkerchief. "That's all I care to say. At the end of thirty days we may—I'm speaking of the big interests I represent—we may decide to buy the line and make it really worth something to the stockholders. You understand, I hope. It's strictly business—it's all right—it's good financiering. After it's all over and those old, hardshell directors wake up, I'll venture to say they'll be pleased all around that this little turn has been made. In the meantime, having been taken care of, you needn't care whether they're pleased or not."

Boyne looked at the sheaf of certificates in Fogg's hand—he bent frightened gaze on the documents stacked on the desk. They lay there representing his responsibility, but they also represented opportunity. The sight of them was a rebuke to the agitated thoughts of treason which assailed him. But the mere papers had no voice to make that rebuke pointed; Mr. Fogg did have a voice:

"Five thousand dollars in your fist, my boy, as soon as I can work the wire to New York—and there's no piker about the man who can have five thousand flashed in here when he asks for it. You can see what kind of men are behind me. What do you care about old man Vose and his crowd?"

"There's Mr. Franklin! I'll be doing a mighty mean trick, Mr. Fogg. No, I'll not do it."

Mr. Fogg did not bluster. He was silent for some time. He pursed his lips and stared at Boyne, and then he shifted his gaze to the ceiling.

"It's too bad—too bad for a young fellow to turn down such an opportunity," he sighed. "It can be done without you, Boyne, in another way. The same result will happen. But you might as well be in on it. Now let me tell you a few instances of how some of the big men in this country got their start."

Mr. Fogg was an excellent raconteur with a vivid imagination, and it did

not trouble his conscience because the narratives he imparted to this wide-eyed youth were largely apocryphal.

"You see," he put in at the end of the first tale, "what a flying start will do for a man. Suppose that chap I've just told you about sat back and refused to jump when the road was all open to him! You don't hear anybody knocking that man nowadays, do you? And yet that's the trick he pulled to get his start."

With a similar snapper did Mr. Fogg touch up each one of his stories of success.

"I—I didn't have any idea—I thought they managed it some other way," murmured David Boyne.

"Your horizon has been limited—you haven't been out in the world enough to know, my son."

"I have heard of all those men, of course. They're big men to-day."

"You didn't think they got to be millionaires by saving the money out of clerks' salaries, did you? Of course, Boyne, I admit that in this affair you'll be up to a little sharp practice. But you're not stealing anything. Nobody wants to steal anything. Nobody can lug off steamships in a vest pocket. It's only a deal—and deals are being made every day."

Fogg was a keen judge of his fellow men. He knew weakness when he saw it. He could determine from a man's lower lip and the set of his nose whether that person were covetous. And he knew now what signified the flush on Boyne's cheeks and the light in his eyes. However, there was something else to reckon with.

"I will not betray Mr. Franklin's confidence in me. Positively, I will not," said the young man. "He's sick, and that would make it worse."

"How sick is he?"

"He is very, very ill. It was an operation, and he has had a relapse. But we hope he's coming out all right."

"What hospital is he in?"

Boyne gave the name.

"I think I'll call up and ask when it is expected that he can see visitors," announced Fogg, with business briskness. "I wish Franklin had been here on deck—Franklin, himself."

"I don't believe Mr. Franklin would turn a trick of this sort," asserted the clerk. "I'd hate to face him, after doing it myself."

"Franklin would be able to see further into a financial deal than a young chap," said Mr. Fogg severely, and then he found his number and made his call.

"Good heavens!" he blurted, after a question. "I am in his office. Yes, I'll tell Boyne."

With a fine affectation of grief and surprise, he snapped the transmitter upon the hook and whirled on Boyne. His back had been toward the young man—he had spoken with hand across the receiver.

"He has just died—he's dead! Franklin has passed away."

"I would have been notified," gasped Boyne.

"They were just going to call you. You heard me say I'd inform you."

"But I must call the hospital—offer my services. I must go up there."

Mr. Fogg put out his hand and pressed the young man back into his chair. "A lulu must be played quick and the pot raked sudden," he reflected.

"Just a moment, my son. Now you're standing on your own bottom. You won't have to explain to Mr. Franklin."

He pointed to the clock. His stories had consumed time. The hour was ten-thirty-five.

"That annual meeting of the Vose line was called for ten of the clock to-day. Mr. Franklin was alive at that hour. He was the clerk of that corporation. What happens now will not embarrass you so far as he's concerned. Be sensible. Make a stroke for your-

self. You're out of a job, anyway. Go to it, now."

Fogg spoke sharply, imperiously. He exerted over the young man all the force of his personality.

"Five thousand dollars—protected by my interests—slipped out of sight for a few months—it's easy. Sit down there and make up your records—vote those proxies. Vote 'em, I say. This meeting was held at ten o'clock. Make up your records."

He stood over Boyne, arguing, promising, urging, and the young man, at last, sweating, flushed, trembling, bent over his documents, sorted them, and made up his records.

"We'll send on a copy to the office of the Vose line by registered mail," commanded Fogg. "Attest it as a copy of the true record by notary. When it drops in on 'em I will be there, with my directors and my little story—and the face of Uncle Vose will be worth looking at, though his language may not be elevating. You come out with me, Boyne. I'm going to the telegraph office."

"But I must get in touch at once with Mr. Franklin's family—offer my services," pleaded the clerk.

"There isn't a thing you can do right now," snapped the masterful gentleman from New York. "I suggest that you close the office. Send the girl home. You should do that much out of respect to your employer's memory."

Ten minutes later the record had been mailed and the flustered Boyne was trotting around town with Mr. Fogg. The latter seemed to have a tremendous amount of business on his hands. He hired a cab and was hustled yon and hither, leaving the young man in the vehicle, with instructions to stay there, whenever a stop was made.

But at last Mr. Fogg returned from an errand with some very tangible results.

He put a packet of bank notes into Boyne's shaking hands.

"Did you ever see as much real money before, my son?" asked Fogg genially. "That's your five thousand. And here's five hundred toward that expense money we promised. I'm suggesting that you leave town to-night. Tuck that cash away on yourself and duck out of sight."

Having secured the money and placed that powerful argument in the young man's hands, Mr. Fogg's hurry and anxiety seemed to be over. When he had seen the packet buttoned inside Boyne's coat he smiled.

"The trade is clinched, and the job is done, son, and I feel sure that being a healthy young American citizen, with the wide world in front of you and plenty of cash to pay your way, you're not going to let go that cash nor do any foolish squealing."

"I've gone too far to back out," admitted Boyne, patting the outside of his coat. "But it seems like a dream."

"I've heard a little piece of good news while I've been running around—forgot to tell you," said Fogg, in a matter-of-fact way. "That fool attendant at the hospital must have misunderstood me, or I misunderstood him. Franklin isn't dead."

"He—isn't—dead?"

"No, last report is that he's better this forenoon. But that's the way some of these crazy attendants mix things up when anybody inquires at a hospital. Now, of course, seeing that the registered copy is on its way, and Franklin is getting better, that's all the more reason why you don't care to hang around these diggings and be annoyed. I've got a scheme—it will take you out of town in a very quiet style. I have telephoned down to the docks, and there's a Vose freighter in here discharging rails. Do you live at home or at a boarding place?"

"I board," said Boyne, still wrestling

with the sickening information that he had betrayed an employer who was alive; somehow, the sentiment that it was equally base to betray a deceased employer had not impressed itself on his benumbed conscience. He was now keenly aware that he feared to meet up with a living and indignant Lawyer Franklin. Fogg questioned, and he gave his address.

"We'll drive there, and I'll wait outside in the cab until you can scratch together a gripful of your things. Don't load yourself down too much. Remember, you've got plenty of cash in your pockets."

A little later Fogg escorted the young man up the gangplank of the *Nequasset,* from whose hold the last of her load of clanging rails was being derricked by feverishly panting windlass engines.

To Captain Zoradus Wass, who was lounging against the rail just outside the pilot house, Mr. Fogg marched with business promptitude, and spoke with assurance.

"Captain, my name is Fletcher Fogg. Within forty-eight hours the directors of the Vose line will elect me president and general manager. That news may be rather astonishing, but it's true."

The veteran skipper did not reply. He shifted a certain bulge from one cheek to the other.

"Well?" queried Fogg a bit sharply.

"I ain't saying anything."

"You believe what I tell you, don't you?"

"I don't know you."

"This young man is David Boyne, acting clerk of the Vose line corporation. The annual meeting has just been held in this city. He made the official records. He will tell you that a new board of directors has been chosen—the old crowd is out."

"That is so," stated Boyne, obeying the prompting of Fogg's quick glance.

"I don't know you, either."

Mr. Fogg was not abashed.

"It isn't especially necessary that you know us. How soon do you leave?"

"We're going out light as soon as them rails are on the wharf."

"I am sending Mr. Boyne with you ou a tour of inspection, captain. Please give him quarters and use him right."

"Nothing doing till I get orders from the owners," declared Captain Wass.

"Haven't I told you that I shall be general manager of this line to-morrow or next day, at the latest?"

"When you're general manager come around and give off your orders, sir."

"I'll do it. I'll come aboard in New York——"

"I'm ordered to Philadelphia," prompted Captain Wass. "That's where you'll find me."

"Philadelphia, then! I'll come aboard and fire you."

"Do just as you feel like doing."

"You refuse to take along this young man?"

"This ain't a passenger boat. I don't know you. Show orders from owners —otherwise nothing doing."

Mate Stanley Mayo had come out of his cabin near at hand. With a young man's quicker perception of possibilities and contingencies, he realized that his skipper might be letting an old man's obstinacy block common sense.

The first mate had an eye for men and their manners. He had been listening to Mr. Fogg. That gentleman certainly seemed to know what he was talking about. And young Mate Mayo, having a nose for news as well as an eye for men, understood that the coast transportation business was in a touchy state generally. He gave Mr. Fogg further inspection and decided that a little skillful compromising was advisable.

"Captain Wass, will you step aside with me a moment?" asked the mate.

"What for?"

"I want to have a word with you."

"Have it right here," said the captain

tartly. "I never have any business that's got to be whispered behind corners." He scowled when his mate gave him a wink, both suggestive and imploring. "Spit it out!"

"The law doesn't allow us to take passengers, as you suggest. And naturally you don't like to act without orders from owners." He looked at Mr. Fogg as he spoke, plainly offering apology to that gentleman. "But we need a second steward and——"

"We don't!" Captain Wass was blunt and tactless.

"I beg pardon—we really do. And we can sign this young man in a—a sort of nominal way, and then when we get to Philadelphia we'll probably find the matter all straightened out."

"What's your name?" asked Mr. Fogg.

"Stanley Mayo, sir. First mate."

"Mr. Mayo, you're a young man with a lot of common sense," declared Fogg.

To himself, staring at the young man, he said: "I'm going to play this game out with two-spots, and here's one ready for the draw!

"I'll see you in Philadelphia, Mr. Mayo," he continued aloud. "I am exactly what I say I am. Captain Wass, you've got something coming to you. Mr. Mayo, you've got something coming to you, also—and it's good!"

His assertiveness was compelling, and even the captain displayed symptoms of being impressed.

"It isn't at all necessary that my agent make this trip with you, Captain Wass. Perhaps I had no distinct right to bring him here. But I am a hustling sort of a business man, and I want to get at matters in short order. However, I ask no favors. Come on, Boyne!"

"We'll sign him on as steward to cover the law," proffered the captain, as terse in consent as he was in refusal.

"Very well," agreed Fogg. "You've got an able first mate, sir."

He flipped his watch out.

"I've got a train to make, gentlemen. Good day!"

He took Boyne by the arm and led him to the ladder from the bridge.

"Son," said he, "you dig into that Mayo chap till you know him up and down and through and through. I'm going to use him. And you keep your mouth shut about yourself."

He backed down the ladder, feeling his way cautiously with his fat legs, trotted to the waiting cab, and was whirled away.

At high noon the next day Fletcher Fogg marched into the general offices of the Vose line in company with ten solid-looking citizens.

Imperturbable and smiling, he allowed President Vose to shriek anathema and to wave the certified copy of the record of the annual meeting under the snub Fogg nose.

"What you say doesn't change the situation in the least," affirmed Mr. Fogg. "You'll find the actual records of the meeting deposited in the usual place in the State of your incorporation. If you think these new directors are not lawfully and duly elected, you can apply to the courts."

"You confounded thief, it's likely to take a year to get a decision. This is damnable. It's piracy. You know what courts are!"

"Poke up your courts, then. It isn't my fault if they're slow."

The new directors filed into the board room and, with great celerity, proceeded to elect Fletcher Fogg to be president and general manager of the Vose line.

"What are you going to do?" pleaded the deposed executive head. "My money is in here—my whole life is in it—my pride—my intention to see that the public gets a square deal. You infernal rogue, what are you going to do with my property?"

"That's my own business," said Fletcher Fogg.

"You can't get away with it—you can't do it," raged Vose. "I'll get at the inside of how that meeting was conducted. You'd better take backwater right now, Fogg, and save yourself. I'm not afraid to tell you what I'm going to do. I'll have a temporary injunction issued. I'll prove fraud was used at that meeting—bribery, yes, sir!"

Mr. Fogg smiled and sat down at the president's desk.

"First, he'll have to find a young man by the name of David Boyne," he told himself.

"Vose," said the new president. "All you can show a court is the record of an annual meeting, duly and legally held. And if the judge wants to have a look at me he'll find me running this line a blamed sight better than you have ever run it."

"It's a cheap, plain trick," bleated the aged steamship manager. "Your crowd is going to sell out to the Paramount—it's your plot."

"Oh, no! We're not inviting injunctions and law and newspaper talk and slurs and slander, Mr. Vose. If there's ever any selling out you'll be the first to suggest it; I never shall. You see, I'm just as frank with you as you are with me. Selling this line to the Paramount right now, just because the new board is in, would be ragged work—very coarse work. Thank Heaven, I have a proper respect for the law—and what it can do to bother a fool. I am not a fool, Mr. Vose."

CHAPTER V.

A PRIZE PACKAGE FROM MR. FOGG.

A slowing tug, tooting fussy and staccato blasts which Captain Wass translated into commands to hold up, intercepted the *Nequasset* in Hampton Roads.

Mr. Fletcher Fogg was a passenger on the tug. In a suit of natty gray, he loomed conspicuously in the alley outside the tug's pilot house. He cursed roundly when he toilsomely climbed the ladder to the freighter's deck, for the rusty sheathing smutched the knees of his trousers.

"I'm doing a little better than I promised you, captain," he stated when he arrived finally in the presence of the master. "I said Philadelphia. But here I am. Do you know me now?"

"Your name is Fogg," returned Captain Wass, exhibiting no special delight.

"And I'm manager of this line. As it seems to be pretty hard for you to get anything through that thick nut of yours, I'll ask you to glance at a paper which will save argument."

The paper was an attested notification, signed by the directors, stating in laconic legal phrase what Mr. Fogg had just declared.

"You recognize my authority, do you?"

"Your bill o' lading reads O. K.," assented the skipper.

"Very well! Exactly! Then you take your orders. Proceed to an anchorage off Lambert Point below Norfolk, pick a berth well off the channel, and put down both hooks. The boat is going out of commission. I find you're not making any money for the owners."

"It ain't my fault. With charters at——" began the master indignantly.

"I haven't any time for a joint debate. You are laid off. Bring your accounts to the main office as soon as you have turned the steamer over to the caretaker—he'll come out from Norfolk."

Manager Fogg turned on his heel to meet Mate Mayo.

"You will report at the main offices, too, Mr. Mayo. Have you master's papers?"

"I have passed—they are waiting for me, sir."

"Very good—you're going to be pro-

moted. I shall put you aboard the passenger steamer *Montana* as captain."

He looked about sharply.

"Where is my agent?"

"There, in the quartermaster's cabin. We gave him that," replied Captain Wass gruffly. "I'm glad I'm out of steamboating. I've learned how to run a boarding house and make money out of it."

Mr. Fogg did not understand that sneer, and he paid no attention to the captain's manner. He started for the cabin indicated.

"Well, you can swell around in gold braid now and catch your heiress," observed Captain Wass to his mate.

"I'm sorry, skipper," said the young man, with real feeling. "You are the man to be promoted, not I. It isn't right—it doesn't seem real."

"There isn't any real steamboating on this coast any longer. It is—I don't know what the devil it is," snarled the veteran. "I have been sniffing and scouting. I'd like to be a mouse in the wall of them New York offices and hear what it is they're trying to do to us poor cusses. Ordered one day to keep the law—ordered the next day to break the law—hounded by owners and threatened by the government! I'm glad two ways, sonny: I'm glad I'm out of it and glad you've got a good job. That last I'm specially glad about. But keep your eye peeled. There are queer doings roundabout you!"

Fogg entered the cabin and shut the door behind him.

He found Boyne sitting on a stool and looking somewhat apprehensive.

"Hiding?" inquired Fogg.

"I thought I wouldn't show myself till I was sure about who was on that tug," said the young man.

"That's the boy, David," complimented Fogg, with real heartiness. "You're no fool. Nothing like being careful. Pack your bag and go aboard the tug."

He marched out.

"Philadelphia charter has been canceled, eh?" asked Captain Wass. The tone of his voice did not invite amity.

"It has, sir."

"Seems queer to turn down a cargo that's there waiting—and the old boat can carry it cheaper than anybody else, the way I've got expenses fined down."

"Are you trying to tell me my business?"

"I have been steamboating forty years, and I know a little something about it."

Mr. Fogg looked at the old mariner, eyes narrowed. He wanted to inform Captain Wass that the latter knew altogether too much about steamboating for the kind of work that was planned out along the coast in those ticklish times.

"Then I ain't to expect anything special from now on?" asked the skipper. In spite of his determination to be crusty and keep his upper lip stiff, he could not repress a little wistfulness, and his eyes roved over the old freighter with affection.

"Not a thing, sir!" Mr. Fogg was blunt and cool. He started for the ladder. He slapped the shoulder of Mayo as he passed the young man.

"Here's the kind of chap we're looking for nowadays. The sooner you report, my boy, the better for you."

With Boyne following him, he climbed down the swaying ladder, and was lifted from the lower rungs over the tug's rail to secure footing.

After the lines had been cast off and the tug went floundering away at a sharp angle, Captain Wass scuffed into his pilot house and gave the bells.

"She seems to feel it—honest she does!" he told Mate Mayo. "She goes off logy. She doesn't pick up her heels. Nor could I do it when I walked in here. Going to be scrapped—the two of us! Cuss their picking and stealing and fighting and financing. They ain't steamboating any longer. They're

using good boats to play checkers in Wall Street with. Well, son," he mourned, hanging dispiritedly over the sill of the window and staring up the wind-swept Chesapeake, "I ain't going to whine—but I shall miss the old packet and the rumble and racket of the old machine down there in her belly. I'd even take the job of watchman aboard her if he would hire me."

"He seems to fancy me a bit—I'll ask him to hire you," proffered the mate eagerly.

"I reckon you didn't get the look in his eye when he fired me," said Captain Wass. "I won't allow you to say a word to him about me. You go ahead, boy, and take the job he has offered. But always remember that he's a slick operator. See what he has done to Uncle Vose—and we haven't been able to worm it out of that passenger how it was done, either. Financing in these days comes pretty nigh to running without lights and under forced draft. It gets a man to prosperity landing in a hurry, providing he doesn't hit anything bigger than he is. They're going to haul up this freighter and blame it onto me because I ain't making money for the owners. They'll have plenty of figgers to show it. Look out that they don't lay something worse and bigger to you. They're going to play a game with the Vose line, I tell you! In the game of big financing, making 'it' out of the little chap who can't run very fast seems to be almighty popular."

He slowed the freighter to a snail's pace when he approached the dredged channel, and at last the leadsman found suitable bottom. Both anchors were let go.

The old skipper sounded the jingle, telling the chief engineer that the engine crew was released. In a speaking tube the captain ordered both boilers to be blown off.

"And there's the end of me as master of my ship," he said.

Mate Mayo's eyes were wet, but words of sympathy to fit the case did not come to his sailor tongue, and he was silent.

When the tug was near Newport News Manager Fogg took David Boyne apart from all ears which might hear. He gave the young man another packet of money.

"The rest of your expenses for a good trip," he said. "You seem to be a chap who knows how to mind his own business—and able to get at the other fellow's business in pretty fair shape. You haven't told such an awful lot about young Mayo, but it's satisfactory to learn that he has lived such a simple and everyday life that there isn't much to tell."

"I never saw a man so sort of guileless," affirmed Boyne. "Not that I have had a lot of experience, but in a lawyer's office you are bound to see considerable of human nature."

"He is no doubt a very deserving young man—and I'm glad I can use him," said Fogg, not able to keep all the grimness out of his tones.

"Now, son," he went on, after a moment of pondering, "you stay on board this tug till I have been gone five minutes. There are a lot of sharp eyes around in these times, and some of Vose's friends would be glad to run to him with a story about me. After five minutes, you take your bag and walk to Dock Seven and go aboard the freighter *Ariel*—go just as if you belonged there. Tell the captain that you are Daniel Boyle—get the name—Daniel Boyle. And never tell anybody until you hear from me that your name is David Boyne. That freighter leaves to-night for Barbados with sugar machinery. You'll have a nice trip."

"I don't care how far away I get," declared Boyne rather bitterly. "I have done a tough trick—I'm pretty much of a renegade. No, I don't care how far I go."

"Nor, I, either," agreed Fogg, but a smile relieved the brutality of the speech. "You see, son, both of us have special reasons why it's just as well for you to be away from these diggings for a time. If some folks get hold of you they'll bother you with a lot of foolish questions. When you get tired of Barbados go ahead and pick out another nice trip, and keep going, and later on we'll find a good job for you up this way. Keep me posted. Good-by."

The tug had docked, and he hurried off and away.

"It's quite a game," reflected Mr. Fogg. "I've bluffed a pot with one two-spot. Work was a little coarse because it had to be done on short notice. The work I do with my second two-spot is going to be smoother, and there won't be so much beefing after the pot is raked in. Too much hollering, and your game gets raided! I can see what would happen to me—John Adams Marston doing it—if I give the strong-arm squad an opening. But if they see the little Fogg boy slip a card in the next deal he's going to make—well, I'll eat the *Montana,* if that's the only way to get rid of her."

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTAIN STANLEY MAYO OF THE "MONTANA."

Stanley Mayo gave his name to a clerk at the offices of the Vose line and asked to see Mr. Fogg. He presented himself a bit timorously. He was not at all sure of his good fortune. It is rather bewildering, when a chap is barely twenty-five, to have the captaincy of a twin-screw passenger racer popped at one as carelessly as tossing a peanut to a child.

He crushed his cap between trembling palms when he followed the clerk into the inner office.

Mr. Fogg rose and greeted Mayo with great cordiality.

"Good morning, captain," said the manager, and the young man's heart leaped at sound of his new title.

"Allow me to hope that you're going to be as lively in keeping on schedule time as you have been in getting here from Norfolk."

"I didn't feel like wasting much time, considering what was promised me," stammered Mayo, not yet sure of himself.

"Afraid I might change my mind?"

"It seemed too good to be true. I wanted to get here as soon as I could and make sure that I had heard right, sir. Here are my papers."

He laid them in the manager's hand. Fogg did not unfold them. He fanned them, indicating a chair.

"Sit down, Captain Mayo. You understand that new management has taken hold of the Vose line in order to get some life and snap into the business. We have strong competition. A big syndicate is taking over the other steamship properties, and we must hustle to keep up with the procession. I'm laying off freighters that are not showing a proper profit—I'm weeding out the moss-covered captains who are not up with the times. That's why I'm putting you on the *Montana* in place of Jacobs."

"He's a good man—one of the best," ventured Mayo, loyalty to his ilk prompting him. "I'll be sorry to see him step aside, as glad as I am to be promoted—and that's honest!"

"That's the way to talk—but we've got to have hustle and dash, and young men can give us what we're after. It doesn't mean that you've got to take reckless chances."

"I hope not, Mr. Fogg. My training with Captain Wass has been the other way. And if you could only give him——"

"Captain, you've got your own row to hoe—keep your eye on it," advised the general manager sharply. "I'm

picking captains for the Vose boats, and I think I understand my business. Now what I want to know is, do you have confidence in me—are you going to be loyal to me?"

"Yes, sir!" affirmed Mayo, impressed by his superior's brisk, brusque, business demeanor.

"Exactly! And the only talk I want you to turn loose is to the effect that you believe I'm doing my best to make this line worth something to the stockholders. Where are you stopping?"

Mayo named a little hotel around the corner.

"I'll put you aboard the *Montana* just as soon as I can arrange the details of transfer. I may let Jacobs make another trip or so. Report here each morning at nine. For the rest of the time keep within reach of the hotel telephone."

Mayo saluted and went out.

Fogg called the observer at the weather bureau on the telephone and asked some questions. He was informed that the wind had swung into the northwest and that the long-prevailing fog had been blown off the coast.

Mr. Fogg appeared to feel somewhat peevish over this sudden departure of the weather phenomenon which bore his family name. He slammed the receiver onto the hook and said a naughty word. A person overhearing might have wondered a bit, for here was a steamboat manager cursing the absence of the fog instead of preserving his profanity to expend on the presence of the demoralizing mists.

But the reign of the north wind in August is never long; three days later the breeze shifted, and the gray ranks of the fog marched in from the open sea. Mayo was awakened early by the clamor of the whistles of river craft, for the little hotel was near the water front. He saw the fog drifting in shredded masses against the high buildings, shrouding the towers. He had been waiting his call to duty with much impatience, finding the confinement of the hotel irksome in the crisp days of sunlight, eager to be out and about this splendid new duty which promised so much.

It was the *Montana's* sailing day from the New York end.

He had gone to sleep, thrilling with the earnest hope that he would be called to take her out.

But when he looked out into that morning, saw the draping curtains of the stalking mists, heard the frantic squallings of craft in the harbor, frenzied howls of alarm, hoarse hootings of protests and warnings, he was suddenly and pointedly anxious to have his elevation to the pilot house of the *Montana* deferred. Better the smoky, cramped office of the little hotel where he had been chafing in dismal waiting. He was perfectly willing to sit there and study over again the advertising chromos on the walls and gaze out on the everlasting procession of rumbling drays.

But at eight o'clock the telephone summoned him.

"This is General Manager Fogg," the voice informed him, though he did not require the information; he knew those crisp tones. "I am speaking from my apartments. Please proceed at once to the *Montana*. I'll come aboard within an hour."

"Do you expect me to take command —to—take her out to-day?" faltered Mayo.

"Certainly. Captain Jacobs will transfer command as soon as I get down."

Mayo had just been rejoicing in his heart because Jacobs would be obliged to bear the responsibility of that day's sailing; he had been perfectly sure that a new man would not be summoned under the conditions which prevailed. He wanted to suggest to Manager Fogg that making the change just then would

be inadvisable. He cleared his throat and searched his soul for words. But a sharp and decisive click told him that Mr. Fogg considered the matter settled. He came away from the telephone, dizzy and troubled, and he was not comforted when he recollected how Manager Fogg had received meek suggestions in the past.

He paid his modest account, took his traveling bag, and started for the Vose line pier.

When he saw her looming in the fog—his ship at last—he felt like running away from her incontinently, instead of running toward her.

Mayo had all of a young man's zeal and ambition and courage—but he had in full measure a sailor's caution and knowledge of conditions; he had been trained by that master of caution, Captain Zoradus Wass. He was really frightened as he stared up at the towering bow, the mighty flanks, the graceful sweep of superstructure and realized that he must guide this giant and her freightage of human beings into the white void of the fog. In his honesty he acknowledged to himself that he was frightened.

The whole, great fabric fairly shouted responsibility at him.

He was confident of his ability. As chief mate he had mastered the problems of courses and maneuvers in the fog along that same route which he must now take. But until then the supreme responsibility had devolved upon another.

Men were rushing freight aboard on rattling trucks—parallel lines of stevedores were working. There were many trunks, avant couriers of the passengers.

He went aboard by the freight entrance and found his way to the row of officers' staterooms.

He recognized the gray-bearded veteran who was pacing the alley outside the pilot house, though the man was not in uniform; it was the deposed master.

"Good morning, Captain Mayo," he said, without any resentment in his tones. "I congratulate you on your promotion. You have done good work on the *Nequasset.*"

"I hope you understand that I didn't go hunting for this job," blurted Mayo.

"I believe it's merely a matter of new policy—so Manager Fogg tells me. Understand me, too, Captain Mayo! I harbor no resentment, especially not against you."

He put out his hand in fine, manly fashion, and was so distinctly the best type of the dignified, self-possessed sea captain of the old school that Mayo fairly flinched at thought of replacing this man.

Captain Jacobs opened the door lettered: "Captain."

"All my truck is out and over the rail. I'll sit in with you, if you don't mind, until Mr. Fogg arrives. You're going to have a thick passage, Captain Mayo."

"It doesn't seem right to me—putting a new man on here in this fog," protested Mayo warmly. "I ought to have her in clear weather till I know her tricks. In a pinch, when you've got to know how a boat behaves, and know it mighty sudden in order to avoid a smash, one false move puts you into the hole."

"They seem to be running steamboat lines from Wall Street nowadays, instead of from the water front," said Captain Jacobs dryly. "It's all in the game as they're playing it nowadays. There's nothing to be said by the men in the pilot house."

"I'm a sailor, and a simple one. I think I know my job, Captain Jacobs, or else I wouldn't accept this promotion. But I've got no swelled head. It's the proper and sensible thing for you to take the *Montana* out to-night and let me hang around the pilot house and watch you. If I can prevail upon Mr.

Fogg to allow it, will you make another trip?"

"I would do it to help you, but I'll be blasted if I'll help Fogg—not if he would get down now and beg me," declared Captain Jacobs, showing temper for the first time. "And if you had been pitchforked out as I've been after all my years of honest service you'd feel just as I do, Captain Mayo. You don't blame me, do you?"

"I can't blame you."

"You know the courses, and you'll have the same staff as I've had. You'll find every notation in the log accurate to the yard or the second. She's a steady old girl and, knowing tide set and courses, as you do, you can depend on her to the turn of a screw. You have my best wishes—but I'm done."

He put the fervor of final resolve into the declaration.

But, with sailor's fraternal spirit of helpfulness, he sat down and went into the details of all the *Montana's* few whims. He called in the mates and introduced them to the new master. They seemed to be quiet, sturdy men who bore no malice because a new policy had put a new man over them.

Then arrived General Manager Fogg, and in this strictly business presence Mayo did not presume to voice any of his doubts or his opinion of his inefficiency.

The rather stiff and decidedly painful ceremony of speeding the former commander was soon over, and Captain Jacobs departed.

"Why haven't you put on your uniform?" asked Fogg. "You have fixed yourself out with a new one, of course?"

"Yes, sir." Mayo's cheeks flushed slightly when he recollected how he had strutted before the mirror in his room at the hotel. But he had been ashamed to hurry into his gilt-incrusted coat in the presence of Captain Jacobs.

"Get it on as soon as you can," ordered the general manager. "I want you to make a general inspection of the boat with me."

They made the tour, and in spite of his misgivings when he saw the mists sweeping past the end of the pier, Captain Mayo, receiving the salutes of respectful subalterns, felt the proud joy of one who has at last arrived at the goal of his ambition.

Master of the crack *Montana,* queen of the Vose fleet, at the age of twenty-five!

He glanced into each of the splendid mirrors of the great saloon to make sure of the gold letters on his cap. The thick carpet seemed grateful to his step. The ship's orchestra was rehearsing in its gallery.

If only that devilish fog would lift! But still it surged in from the sea, and the glass, down to 29.40, promised no clearing weather.

"Safety to the minutest detail—that's my motto," declared Manager Fogg. "Order a fire drill."

It was accomplished, and Mr. Fogg criticized the lack of snap.

He was rather severe after the lifeboat drill was over.

He ordered a second rehearsal.

He commanded that the crew do it a third time. The warmth of his insistence on this feature of shipboard discipline was very noticeable.

"And when you put those boats back see to it that every line is free and coiled and every cover loose. It costs a lot of good money if you kill off passengers in these days."

Then he hurried away.

"I'll see you before sailing time," he informed Captain Mayo.

The new skipper was glad to be alone and to have leisure for study of the steamer's log books. He had been accustomed to the freighter's slower time on the courses. He did a little figuring. He found that at seventy-five revolu-

tions per minute the *Montana* would log off about the same speed that the freighter made when doing her best. He resolved to make the fog an excuse and slow down to the *Nequasset's* familiar rate of progress. He reflected that he would feel pretty much at home under those circumstances. He was heartened, and went about the ship looking less like a malefactor doomed to execution.

When General Manager Fogg bustled on board a few minutes prior to the advertised sailing time at five o'clock, he commented on Captain Mayo's improved demeanor.

"Getting one of the best jobs on this coast seemed to make considerable of a mourner out of you. Perhaps a mirror has shown you how well you look in that new uniform. At any rate, I'm glad to see you have chirked up. And now I'll give you a piece of news that ought to make you look still happier: I'm going along on this trip with you. If you show me that you can do a good job in this kind of weather you needn't worry about your position."

The expression on Captain Mayo's face did not indicate unalloyed delight when he heard this "good news." Unaccustomed as he was to the ship, he could not hope to make a smooth showing.

"And still you refuse to cheer up!" remonstrated the manager.

"I am glad you are going along, sir. Don't misunderstand me. But a sailor is a pretty serious chap when he feels responsibility. I'm undertaking a big stunt."

"It's the best way to find out whether you're the man for the job—whether you're the man I think you are. It's a test that beats sailing chips on a puddle."

"I'm glad you're aboard," repeated the captain. "It's going to shade down my responsibility just a little."

"It is, is it?" cried Manager Fogg, his tones sharp. "Not by a blamed sight! You're the captain of this craft. I'm a passenger. Don't try to shirk. You aren't afraid, are you?"

They were standing beside the dripping rail outside the pilot house. Far below them, in the spacious depths of the steamer, a bugle sounded long-drawn notes and the monotonous calls of stewards warned "All ashore!"

The gangways were withdrawn, with dull "clackle" of wet chains over pulleys, and Captain Mayo, after a swift glance at his watch, to make sure of the time, ordered a quartermaster to sound the signal for "Cast off!" The whistle yelped a gruff note, and seeing that all was clear, the captain yanked the auxiliary bell pulls at the rail. Two for the port engine, two for the starboard, and the *Montana* began to back into the gray pall which shrouded the river.

Captain Mayo saw the lines of faces on the pier, husbands and wives, mothers and sweethearts, bidding good-by to those who waved farewell from the steamer's decks.

He gathered himself with supreme grip of resolve.

It was up to him! He almost spoke it aloud.

Tremors of doubt did not agitate him any longer. It was unthinking faith, nevertheless it was implicit confidence, that all those folks placed in him. They intrusted themselves to his vessel with the blind trust of travelers who pursued a regular route, not caring how the destination were reached as long as they came to their journey's end.

The hoarse, long, warning blast which announced to all in the river that the steamer was leaving her dock drowned out the shouts of farewell and the strains of the gay air the orchestra was playing.

"See you later," said General Manager Fogg. "I think I'll have an early dinner."

Captain Mayo climbed the short ladder and entered his pilot house.

It was up to him!

CHAPTER VII.

THE TEST OF A MAN.

With starboard engine clawing her backward and the port engine driving her ahead, the *Montana* swung her huge bulk when she was free of the penning piers. The churning propellers, offsetting, turned her in her tracks. Then she began to feel her way out of the maze of the traffic.

The grim, silent men of the pilot houses do not talk much even when they are at liberty on shore. They are taciturn when on duty.

They do not relate their sensations when they are elbowing their way through the East River in a fog; they haven't the language to do so.

A psychologist might make much out of the subject by discussing concentration sublimated, human senses coördinating sight and sound on the instant, a sort of sixth sense which must be passed on into the limbos of guesswork as instinct.

The man in the pilot house would not in the least understand a word of what the psychologist was talking about.

The steamboat officer merely understands that he must be onto his job!

The *Montana* added her voice to the bedlam of river yawp.

The fog was so dense that even the lookout posted at her fore windlasses was a hazy figure as seen from the pilot house. A squat ferryboat which was headed across the river, straight at the slip where her shore gong was hailing her, splashed under the steamer's bows, two tugs loafed nonchalantly across in the other direction—saucy sparrows of the river traffic, always underfoot and dodging out of danger by a breathless margin.

Whistle blasts piped or roared singly and in pairs, a duet of steam voices, or blended at times into a puzzling chorus.

A steamer's whistle in the fog conveys little information except to announce that a steam-propelled craft is somewhere yonder in the white blank, unseen, under way. No craft is allowed to sound passing signals unless the vessel she is signaling is in plain sight.

Captain Mayo could see nothing—even the surface of the water was almost indistinguishable.

Ahead, behind, to right and left, everything that could toot was busy and vociferous. Here and there a duet of three staccato blasts indicated that neighbors were threatening to collide and were crawfishing to the best of their ability.

Twice the big steamer stopped her engines and drifted until the squabble ahead of her seemed to have been settled.

A halt mixes the notations of the log, but the mates of the steamer made the Battery signals, and after a time the spidery outlines of the first great bridge gave assurance that their allowances were correct.

Providentially there was a shredding of the fog at Hell Gate, a shore breeze flicking the mists off the surface of the water.

Then was revealed the situation behind particularly emphatic and uproarious "one long and two short" blasts of a violent whistle. A Lehigh Valley tug was coming down the five-knot current with three light barges which the drift had skeowowed until they were taking up the entire channel. With their cables, the tug and tow stretched for at least four thousand feet, almost a mile of dangerous drag.

"Our good luck, sir," vouchsafed the first mate. "She was howling so loud, blamed if I could tell whether she was coming or going. She's got no business coming down the Sound."

Captain Mayo, his teeth set hard, his

rigid face dripping with moisture as he stood in the open window, stopped the engines of his giant charge and jingled for full speed astern in order to halt her. He had no desire to battle for possession of the channel with what he saw ahead.

At that moment Manager Fogg came into the pilot house, disregarding the "No Admittance" sign by authority of his position. He lighted a cigar and displayed the contented air of a man who has fed fully.

"You have been making a pretty slow drag of it, haven't you, Captain Mayo? I've had time to eat dinner—and I'm quite a feeder at that! And we haven't made the gate yet!"

"We couldn't do a stroke better and be safe," said the captain over his shoulder, his eyes on the tow.

"What's the matter now?"

"A tug and three barges in the way."

"Do you mean to say you're holding up a Vose liner with eight hundred passengers, waiting for a towboat? Look here, Mayo, we've got to hustle folks to where they want to go, and get them there on time."

"That tow is coming down with the current, and has the right of way, sir. And there's no chance of passing, for she's sweeping the channel."

"I don't believe there's any law that makes a passenger boat hold up for scows," grumbled Fogg. "If there is one, a good man knows how to get around it and keep up his schedule." He paced the pilot house at the extreme rear, puffing his cigar.

He grunted when Mayo gave the go-ahead bells and the throb of the engines began.

"Now ram her along, boy. People in these days don't want to waste time on the road. They're even speeding up the automobile hearses."

Captain Mayo did not reply. He was grateful that the dangers of Hell Gate had been revealed. The mists hung in wisps against North Brother Island when he swung into the channel of the gate, and he could see, far ahead, the shaft of the lighthouse. It was a stretch where close figuring was needed, and this freak of the mists had given him a fine chance. He jingled for full speed and took a peep to note the bearing of Sunken Meadow spindle.

"Nothe east, five-eighths east, sir!" he directed the quartermaster at the wheel.

The man repeated the command mechanically and brought her to her course for the Middle Ground passage.

After they had rounded North Brother, Whitestone Point tower was revealed. It really seemed as if the fog were clearing, and even in the channel between Execution Rocks and Sands Point his hopes were rising. But in the wider waters off Race Rock the *Montana* drove her black snout once more into the white pall, and her whistle began to bray again.

The young captain sighed.

"East, a half nothe, sir!"

"East, a half nothe, it is, sir!"

At least, he had conquered East River, the gate, and the narrows beyond, and had twenty-nine miles straight ahead to the whistler off Point Judith. He was resolved to be thankful for small favors.

He hoped that with the coming of the night and on account of the prevalence of the fog he would find that shipping of the ordinary sort had stopped moving. However, in a few minutes, he heard telltale whistles ahead, and he signaled half speed. A lumbering old lighter with a yawing derrick passed close aboard. An auxiliary fisherman, his exhaust snapping like a machine gun, and seeming to depend on that noise for warning, was overtaken.

"Can you leave that window for a minute, Captain Mayo?" asked the general manager.

The captain promptly joined Mr. Fogg at the rear of the spacious pilot house.

"See here, cap," remonstrated his superior, "I came down through these waters on the *Triton* of the Union line the other day, and she made her time. What's the matter with us?"

"I'm obeying the law, sir. And there are new warnings, just issued." He pointed to the placard headed "Safety First" in big, red letters. "The word has been passed that the first captain who is caught with the goods will be made an example of."

"Is that so?" commented Fogg, studying the end of his cigar. His tone was a bit peculiar. "But the *Triton* came along."

"And she nigh rammed the *Nequasset* in the fog the last trip I made up the coast. It was simply touch and go, Mr. Fogg, and all her fault. We were following the rules to the letter."

"And that's one way of spoiling the business of a steamboat line," snapped Fogg. He added, to himself, "But it isn't my way!"

"I'm sorry, but I have been trained to believe that a record for safety is better than all records for speed, sir."

"I let Jacobs go because he was old-fashioned, Mayo. This is the age of taking chances—taking chances and getting there! Business, politics, railroading, and steamboating—the people expect it. The right folks do it."

"You are general manager of this line, Mr. Fogg. Do you order me to make schedule time, no matter what conditions are?"

"You are the captain of this boat. I simply want you to deliver up-to-date goods. As to how you do it, that is not my business. I'm not a sea captain, and I don't presume to advise as to details."

Captain Stanley Mayo was young. He knew the 'long-coast game. He was ambitious. Opportunity had presented itself. He understood the unreasoning temper of those who sought dividends without bothering much about details. He knew how other passenger captains were making good with the powers who controlled transportation interests. He confessed to himself that he had rather envied the master of the rushing *Triton* who had swaggered past as if he owned the sea.

Till then Mayo had been the meek and apologetic passer-by along the ocean lanes, expecting to be crowded to one side, dodging when the big fellow bawled for open road.

He remembered with what haste he always maneuvered the old *Nequasset* out of the way of harm when he heard the lordly summons of the passenger liners. Was not that the general method of the freighter skippers? Why should he not expect them to get out of his way, now that he was one of the swaggerers of the sea? Let them do the worrying now, as he had done the worrying and dodging in the past!

He stepped back to his window, those reflections whirling in his brain.

"This is no freighter," he told himself; "Fogg is right. If I don't deliver the goods somebody else will be called on to do it, so what's the use? I'll play the game. Just remember—will you, Stanley Mayo—that you've got your heart's wish, and are captain of the *Montana*. If I lose this job on account of a placard with red letters, I'll kick myself on board a towboat, and stay there the rest of my life."

He yanked a log book from the rack and noted the steamer's average speed from the entries.

He signaled to the engine room through the speaking tube.

"Give her two hundred a minute, chief!" he ordered.

And fifteen seconds later, her engines pulsing rhythmically, the big craft was splitting fog and water at express speed, howling for little fellows to get out from underfoot.

Down in the gleaming depths of her the orchestra was lilting a gay waltz, silver clattered over the white napery of the dining room, men and women laughed and chattered and flirted; men wrote telegrams, making appointments for the morrow at early hours, and the wireless flashed them forth. They were sent with the certainty on the part of the senders that no man in these days waits for tide or fog. The frothing waters flashed past in the night outside, and they who ventured forth upon the dripping decks glanced at the fan of white spume spreading into the fog, and were glad to return to cozy chairs and the radiance of the saloon.

High up forward, in the pilot house, were the eyes and the brains of this rushing monster. It was dark there except for the soft, yellow gleam of the binnacle lights. It was silent but for the low voice of a mate who announced his notations.

Occasionally the mates glanced at each other in the gloom when a steamer's whistle sounded ahead. This young captain seemed to be a chap who carried his nerve with him! They were used to the more cautious system of Captain Jacobs.

The master did not reduce speed. He leaned far out, his hand at his ear. The third time the unknown sounded her blast he took a quick glance at the compass.

"Two points shift—so she shows," he said aloud. "We'll pass her all right."

The change in the direction of the sound had assured him.

A few minutes later the whistle voiced a location safely abeam.

But the next whistle they heard sounded dead ahead, and increased in volume of sound only gradually. They were overtaking a vessel headed in the same direction.

Captain Mayo pulled the cord oftener and sounded more prolonged, more imperious hoots. He ordered no change in his course. He was headed for the Point Judith whistler, and did not propose to take chances on fumbling by any detours. The craft ahead at last seemed to recognize the voice of its master. The sound of the whistle showed that it had swung off the course.

The mate mumbled notations.

"All ears out!" ordered the captain crisply. "We ought to make that whistler!" And in the next breath he said: "There she is!" He pointed a wet hand ahead and slightly to port. A queer, booming grunt came to them.

"You're all right, old girl," he declared. "Jacobs wasn't overpraising you." He reached over the sill and patted the woodwork of his giant pet.

He turned to the quartermaster.

"East, five-eighths south," was his direction.

"East, five-eighths south, sir!"

"What's the next we make, captain?" asked the general manager from the gloom at the rear of the pilot house.

"Sow and Pigs Lightship, entrance of Vineyard Sound, sir. Twenty-one and one-half miles."

"Good work! I'm going to take a turn below. See you again! What can I tell any uneasy gentleman who is afraid he'll miss a business appointment in the morning?"

"Tell him we'll be on time to the dot," declared the captain quietly.

Mr. Fogg closed the pilot-house door behind himself and chuckled when he eased his way down the slippery ladder.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAZARDS OF THE UNRECKONED.

Mr. Fogg sauntered through the brilliantly lighted saloon, hands in his pockets, giving forth an impression of a man entirely at ease. Nobody appeared to recognize the new general manager of the Vose line, and he at-

tracted no special attention. But if any one had been sufficiently interested in Mr. Fogg to note him closely it would have been observed that his mouth worked nervously when he stood at the head of the grand stairway and stared about him. His jowls sagged. When he pulled out his handkerchief his hand trembled.

He descended the stairs to the main deck and peered about in the smoking quarters, running his eyes over the faces of the men gathered there.

All at once he lifted his chin with a little jerk and climbed the stairs again.

A big man tossed away a cigar and followed at a respectful distance. He pursued Mr. Fogg through the saloon and down a corridor and went into a stateroom on the general manager's heels.

"By gad, Burkett, I'm getting cold chills," exploded Mr. Fogg, as soon as the door was closed.

"Don't understand just why."

"Those people out there—I've just been looking 'em over. It's monkeying with too big a proposition, Burkett. You can't reckon ahead on a thing like this."

"Sure you can. I've doped it right."

"Oh, I know you understand what you're talking about, but——"

"Well, I ought to know. I've been pilot for the resurvey party on the shoals for the last two months. I know every inch of the bottom."

"But the panic. There's bound to be one. The rest of 'em won't understand, Burkett. It's going to be awful on board here. I'll be here, myself. I can't stand it."

"Look here, governor, there won't be any panic. She'll slide into the sand like a baby nestling down into a crib. There isn't a pebble in that sand for miles. Half of this bunch of passengers will be abed and asleep. They won't wake up. The rest will never know anything special except that the engines have stopped. And that ain't anything unusual in a fog. It's a quiet night—not a ripple. Nothing to hurt us. The wireless will bring the revenue cutter out from Wood's Hole, and she'll stand by till morning and take 'em off."

"The theory is good. It's mostly my own idea, and I'm proud of it, and I was mighty glad to find a man of your experience to back me up with the practical details," said Fogg, trying to fortify his faith with words, but failing. "But now that it's coming down to cases I'm afraid of it."

"Well, it's up to you, of course, governor. I insist it can be done, and done smooth, and you'll lay off this steamer nice, slick, and easy! That will put a crimp into the Vose line and make them stockholders take notice the next time a fair offer is made."

"It's the thing to do, and I know it—the conditions are just right, and we've got a green captain to make the goat of. All set! But it's an awful thing to monkey with—eight hundred people, and no knowing how they'll take it! It came over me while I stood there and looked at 'em."

"Sand is sand, and the whole, round earth is braced up under that sand. She can't sink. She'll simply gouge her way like a plow into a furrow, and there she'll stick, sitting straight, solid as an island—and it will be a devil of a while before they'll be able to dig her out. It's a crimp for the Vose line, I say, governor!"

Malevolence glowed in Burkett's little eyes.

"Of course, the money I'm getting for this job looks good to me, governor, but my chance to put a wallop into anything that old Vose and his sons are interested in looks just as good. I wouldn't be in this just for the money end of it. I'm no pirate, but when they kicked me out of the pilot house and posted me up and down this coast, they

put themselves in line to get what's coming to 'em from me."

"But have you considered every side of it?" pleaded Fogg. "You're the practical man in this proposition. What can happen?"

"If you do exactly what I tell you to do, nothing can happen but what's on our program. Just let me stiffen you up by running the thing over once more."

He pulled a hand-smutched, folded chart from his breast pocket and spread it over his knees. With blunt forefinger he indicated the points to which he made reference in his explanation.

"When he fetches Nobska horn on his port, bearing nothe west by west, he'll shift his course. After about five miles he's due to shift again, swinging six points to norrard. You'll hear the mate name the bearing of West Chop steam whistle. Then you walk right up to the left of the compass and stand there. You may hear a little tongue clattering for a few seconds. There'll be a little cussing, maybe, but you won't be cussed, of course. You stand right there, calm and cool, never batting an eyelid. And then it will happen, and when it does happen it will be a surprise party all right."

"It's wrecking a seven-thousand-ton passenger steamer in the night!" mourned the general manager.

"It isn't. It's putting her into a safe cradle."

"But at this speed!"

"That chap in the pilot house is no fool. He'll get his hint in time to save her from real damage. You needn't worry!"

Fogg opened his traveling bag and lifted out a strip of metal. He handled it as gingerly as if it were a reptile, and he looked at it with an air as if he feared it would bite him.

"That's the little joker," said Burkett. "About two points' deviation by local attraction will do the business!"

"I'm tempted to throw it overboard and call it all off, Burkett. I have put through a good many deals in my life in the big game, but this looks almost too raw. I can't help it! I feel a hunch as if something was going to miscue."

"I've got no more to say, governor."

"My crowd doesn't ask questions of me, but they expect results. If I don't do it, I suppose I'll kick myself in the morning." He cocked up his ear and listened to the bawling of the liner's great whistle. "But it seems different in the night."

"You ain't leaving any tracks," encouraged Burkett. "And this being his first run makes it more plausible. You're here all naturally, yourself. It might seem rather queer if you made another trip. It's his first run on her, I remind you. If he makes a slip-up it won't surprise the wise guys a mite."

"It seems to be all set—I've got to admit it. By gad, Burkett, I have always put a thing through when I've started on it. That's why they call in the little Fogg boy. I'd rather apologize to my conscience than to—well, never mind who he is.

He tucked the strip of metal into his inside coat pocket and buttoned the coat.

"Blast it, nothing that's very bad can happen in this calm sea—and that last lifeboat drill went off fine. Here goes!" declared Fogg, with desperate emphasis.

"That's the boy!" declared Burkett, encouraged to familiarity by their association in mischief.

The general manager found the night black when he edged his way along the wet deck to the pilot house. The steamer's lights made blurred patches in the fog. Now she seemed to have the sea to herself; there were no answering whistles.

"I'm back again, Captain Mayo," he said as he closed the door against the

night. "I hope I won't bother you folks here. I'll stay out from underfoot."

He sat down on a transom at the extreme rear of the house and smoked his cigar, with nervous vehemence.

Another quartermaster succeeded the man at the wheel, the mate made his notations of dead reckoning and pricked the chart, the usual routine was proceeded with. Mayo continued at the window, head outthrust, except when he glanced at chart or compass or noted the dials which marked the screws' revolutions.

Every now and then he put his ear to the submarine-signal receiver. At last he heard the faint, far throb of the Sow and Pigs submarine bell—seven strokes, with the four seconds' interval, then the seven strokes repeated.

A bit later he got, sweet and low as an elfland horn, the lightship's chime whistle. It was dead ahead, which was not exactly to his calculation. The tide set had served stronger than he had reckoned. He ordered the helmsman to ease her off a half point, in order to make safe offing for the turn into Vineyard Sound.

Well up in the sound the bell of Tarpaulin Cove reassured him, and after a time he heard the unmistakable blast of the great reed horn of Nobska, uttering its triple hoot, like a giant owl perched somewhere in the mists.

"Nobska," said the mate. "We are certainly coming on, sir."

"Nobly," agreed Captain Mayo, allowing himself a moment of jubilation, even though the dreaded shoals were ahead.

"Are you going to keep this speed across the shoals, Captain Mayo?" asked the general manager, displaying real deference.

"No, sir!" stated the captain, with decision, bracing himself to give Mr. Fogg a sharp word or two if that gentleman advanced any more of his "business man's reasons" for speed. "It would not be showing due care."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," affirmed Mr. Fogg heartily. "It may be a little out of place, right now, but I want you to know that I feel that I have picked out just the right man to command this ship. I'm glad of a chance to say this where your mates can hear me."

"Thank you, Mr. Fogg," returned the young man gratefully. "This is a soul-racking job, and I'm glad you are here to see what we are up against. I don't feel that we'll be wasting much time in crossing the shoals if we go carefully. We can let her out after we swing east of Monomoy. She's a grand old packet."

In the gloom, Fogg ran his fingers gingerly over the outside of his coat to make sure that the strip of metal was in its place.

There was silence in the pilot house after that. Ahead there was ticklish navigation. There were the narrow slues, the crowding shoals, the blind turns of Nantucket Sound, dreaded in all weathers, but a mariner's horror in a fog.

Nobska's clarion call drew slowly abeam to port, and after due lapse of time West Chop's steam whistle lifted its guiding voice in the mists ahead.

"Better use the pelorus and be careful about West Chop's bearing after we pass her, Mr. Bangs," Captain Mayo warned his first mate.

As a sailor well knows, the bearing of West Chop gives the compass direction for passage between the shoals known as Hedge Fence and Squash Meadow—a ten-mile run to Cross Rip Lightship. In a fog it is vitally important to have West Chop exact to the eighth of a point.

Fogg was glad that he was alone where he sat. He trembled so violently that he set an unlighted cigar between

his teeth to keep them from rattling together.

The mate was outlined against the window, his eyes on the instrument, his ear cocked. Every half minute West Chap's whistle hooted.

"Right, sir!" the mate reported at last, speaking briskly. "I make it west by nothe, five-eighths nothe."

Fogg rose and half staggered forward, taking a position just to the left of the wheel and compass.

"East by south, five-eighths south," the captain directed the helmsman. "Careful attention, sir. Tide is flood, four knots. Make the course good!"

The quartermaster repeated and twirled his wheel for the usual number of revolutions to allow a three points' change.

Captain Mayo stepped back and glanced at the compass to make certain that his helmsman was finding his course properly.

"What in tophet's name is the matter with you, man?" he shouted. "Bring this ship around—bring her around!"

He grabbed the wheel and spun it.

"You're slower than the devil drawing molasses," raged Mayo, forgetting his dignity.

"She must have yawed," protested the man. "I had her on her course, sir. I supposed I had her over."

"You are not to suppose. You are to keep your eyes on that compass card and move quicker when I give an order."

The helmsman's eyes bulged as he stared at the compass. While he had winked his eyes, so it seemed to him, the true course had fairly straddled away from the lubber line.

In his frantic haste, Captain Mayo put her over too far. He helped the man set her on the right course.

Then he signaled half speed. The devious and the narrow paths were ahead of them.

"That's an almighty funny jump the old dame made then," pondered the quartermaster. But he was too well trained to argue with a captain. He accepted the fault as his own, and now that she was on her course, he held her there doggedly.

Even the *Montana's* half speed was a respectable gait, and the silent crew in her pilot house could hear the sea lathering along her sides.

"What do you make of that, Mr. Bangs?" the captain asked, after a prolonged period of listening.

"Bell, sir!"

"But the only bell in that direction would be on Hedge Fence Lightship in case her whistle has been disabled."

"Sounds to me like a vessel at anchor."

"But it's right in the fairway." Captain Mayo convinced himself by a glance at the compass. "No craft would drop her hook in the fairway.

"That's no bell on the Hedge Fence," reflected the captain. "It's a schooner's bell. But sound often gets freaky in a fog. We're on our course to the fraction, and we've got to keep going!" And after a moment the bell ceased its clangor. It was distant sound, and its location was indefinite even to a sharp ear.

"It strikes me that sounds in general are a little warped all of a sudden," said the captain. "I'll swear that I can hear Hedge Fence's five-second blasts now. But there she howls off the starboard bow. The clouds must be giving us an echo. We've got to leave it to the compass."

A skillful mariner is careful about forsaking the steady finger of a proved compass in order to chase sounds around the corner in foggy weather. He understands that air strata raise the dickens with whistle blasts. There are zones of silence—there is divergence of sound.

Fogg held his position, his legs braced, and nobody paid any especial

attention to him. They in the pilot house were too busy with other affairs.

There is one sound in thick weather that tells a navigator much. It is the echo of his own whistle.

The big steamer was hoarsely hooting her way.

Suddenly there was a sound which fairly flew up and hit Captain Mayo in the face. It was an echo. It was the sound of the *Montana's* whistle blast flung back at him from some object so near at hand that there was barely a clock tick between whistle and echo.

The captain yelped a great oath and yanked his bell pulls furiously.

"That echo came from a schooner's sails," he shouted.

Then dead ahead clanged her bell. The next instant, plunging along at least eight miles an hour, in spite of engines clawing at full speed astern, the towering bow smashed into the obstacle in her path.

It was a mighty shock which sent a tremor from stem to stern of the great fabric.

They saw that they hit her—a three-masted schooner at anchor, with her sails set, dingy canvas wet and idle in the foggy, breathless night.

But their impact against her was almost as if they had hit a pier. The collision sent them reeling about the pilot house.

As they drove past they saw her go down, her stern a spintered mass of wreckage, in which men were frantically struggling.

"That's a granite lugger—see her go down, like a stone," gasped Mate Bangs. "My God! What do you suppose she has done to us forward?"

"Get there—get there!" roared Captain Mayo. "Get there and report, sir!"

But before the chief mate was halfway down the ladder on his way, the wailing voice of the lookout reported disaster.

"Hole under the water line forward," he cried.

"There are men in the water back there, sir," said a quartermaster.

"We're making water fast in the forward compartment," came a voice through the speaking tube.

Already they in the pilot house could hear the ululation of women in the depths of the ship, and then the husky clamor of the many voices of men drowned the shriller cries.

Captain Mayo had seen the survivors from the schooner struggling in the water. But he rang for full speed ahead and ordered the quartermaster to aim her into the north, knowing that land lay in that direction.

"Eight hundred lives on my shoulders and a hole in her," he told himself while all his world of hope and ambition seemed rocking to ruin. "I can't wait to pick up those poor devils."

In a few minutes—in so few minutes that all his calculations as to his location were upset, the *Montana* plowed herself to a shuddering halt on a shoal, her bow lifting slightly. And when the engines were stopped she rested there, sturdily upright, steady as an island.

But in her saloon the men and women who fought and screamed and cursed, beating to and fro in windrows of humanity like waves in a cavern, were convinced that the shuddering shock had signaled the doom of the vessel. Half-dressed men, still dizzy with sleep, confused by dreams which blended with the terrible reality, trampled the helpless underfoot, seeking exit from the saloon.

The hideous uproar which announced panic was a loud call to the master of the vessel. He understood what havoc might be wrought by the brutal senselessness of the struggle.

He ran from the pilot house, stepping on the feet of the general manager, who was stumbling about in bewildered fashion.

"Call all the crew to stations and guard the exits," Captain Mayo commanded the second mate.

On his precipitate way to the saloon, the captain passed the room of the wireless operator, and the tense crackle of the spark told him that the S. O. S. signal was winging its beseeching flight through the night.

Three men, half dressed, with life preservers buckled on in hit-or-miss fashion, met him on the deck, dodged his angry clutch, and leaped over the rail into the sea, yelling with all the power of their lungs.

A quartermaster was at the captain's heels.

"Get over a lifeboat on each side and attend to those idiots!" roared Mayo.

He thrust his way into a crowded corridor, beating frantic men back with his fists, adjuring, assuring, appealing, threatening.

He mounted upon a chair in the saloon.

He fairly out-bellowed the rest of them. Men of the sea are trained to shout against the tempest.

"You are safe! Keep quiet! Sit down! This steamer is ashore on a sand bank. She's as solid as Bunker Hill."

He shouted these assurances over and over.

They began to look at him, to pay heed to him. His uniform marked his identity.

"You lie!" screamed an excited man. "We're out to sea. We're sinking. Where are your lifeboats?"

Bedlam began again. Like the fool who shouts "Fire!" in a throng, this brainless individual revived all the fears of the frenzied passengers.

Mayo realized that heroic action was necessary. He leaped down from the chair, seized the man who had shouted, and beat the fellow's face with the flat of his hard hand.

That scene of conflict was startling enough to serve as a real jolt to their attention. They hushed their cries; they looked on, impressed, cowed.

"If there's any other man in this crowd who wants to tell me I'm a liar, let him stand out and say so," shouted Captain Mayo. "You're making fools of yourselves. There's no danger."

He released the pallid and trembling man of whom he had made an example and stepped onto a chair. He put up his hand, dominating them until he had secured absolute silence.

"You—you—you!" he said crisply, darting finger here and there, pointing out individuals. "You seem to have more level heads than the rest, you men! Go forward where the man is casting the lead. Cast the lead yourselves. Come back here and report to these passengers, as their committee. I'm telling you the truth. There's no water under us, to speak of."

He remained in the saloon until his committee returned. The man who reported looked a bit sheepish.

"The captain is right, ladies and gentlemen. We could even see the sand where she has plowed it up—they've got lanterns over the rail. There's no danger."

A steward trotted to Captain Mayo and handed him a slip of paper. The captain read the message and shook the paper in the faces of the throng.

"The revenue cutter *Acushnet* has our wireless call and is starting, and the *Itasca* will follow. I advise you to go to bed and go to sleep. You're perfectly, absolutely safe. You will be transferred when it's daylight. Now be men and women!"

He hurried out on deck. His men were hoisting aboard the three dripping, sputtering passengers who had run amuck.

"And those same men would look after a runaway horse and sneer that he didn't have any brains," remarked Captain Mayo disgustedly.

For the next half hour he was a busy man. He investigated the *Montana's* wound, first of all. He found her flooded forward—her nose anchored into the sand with a rock-of-ages solidity.

His heart sank when he realized what her plight meant from the wrecking and salvage viewpoint. In those shifting sands, winnowed constantly by the rushing currents of the sound, digging her out might be a Gargantuan task, working her free a hopeless undertaking.

His tour of investigation showed him that except for her smashed bow, the steamer was intact. Her helplessness there in the sand was the more pitiable on that account.

He had not begun to take account of stock of his own responsibility for this disaster. The whir of events had been too dizzying. As master of the ship he would be held to account for her mishap. But to what extent had he been negligent? He could not figure it out. He realized that excitement plays strange pranks with a man's consciousness of linked events or of the passage of time. He could not understand why the steamer piled up so quickly after the collision. According to his ample knowledge of the shoals, he had been on his true course and well off the dangerous shallows.

His first mate met him amidship.

"I sent off one of our lifeboats, sir. Told 'em to go back and hunt for the men we saw in the water. They found two. Others seem to be gone."

"I'm glad you thought of it, Mr. Bangs. I ought to have attended to it, myself."

"You had enough on your hands, sir, as it was. She was the *Lucretia M. Warren,* with granite from Vinalhaven. That's what gave us such an awful tunk."

"Who are the men?"

"Mate and a sailor. They've had some hot drinks, and are coming along all right."

"We'll have a word with them, Mr. Bangs."

The survivors of the *Warren* were forward in the crew's quarters, and they were still dazed. They had not recovered from their fright; they were sullen.

"I'm sorry, men! Sailor to sailor, you know what I mean if I don't say any more. It's bad business on both sides. But what were you doing in the fairway?"

"We wa'n't in the fairway," protested a grizzled man, evidently the mate. He was uneasy in his borrowed clothes—he had surrendered his own garments to a pantryman who had volunteered to dry them.

"You must have been," insisted Captain Mayo.

"I know we was all of two miles north of the regular course. I ain't sailed across these shoals for thirty years not to know soundings when I make 'em myself. Furthermore, she'll speak for herself, where she's sunk."

The captain could not gainsay that dictum.

The mate scowled at the young man.

"I've got a question of my own. What ye doing, yourself, all of two miles out of your course, whanging along, tooting your old whistle as if you owned the sea and had rollers under you to go across dry ground with, too?"

"I was not two miles out of my course," protested the captain—and yet the sickening feeling came to him that there had been some dreadful error, somewhere, somehow.

"When they put these steamers into the hands of real men instead of having dudes and kids run 'em, then shipping will stand a fair show on this coast," declared the mate, casting a disparaging glance at Mayo's new uniform. "It was my watch on deck, and I know

what I'm talking about. You came belting along straight at us, two points out of your course, and I thought the fog was playing tricks, and I didn't believe my own ears. You have drowned my captain and four honest men. When I stand up in court they'll get the straight facts from me, I can tell you that. And they tell me it's your first trip. I might have knowed it was some greenhorn, when I heard you coming two points off your course. You'd better take off them dude clothes. I reckon you've made your last trip!"

It was the querulous railing of a man who had been near death; it was the everlasting grouch of the sailing man against the lordly steamboater. Mayo had no heart for rebuke or retort. What had happened to him, anyway? This old schooner man seemed to know exactly what he was talking about.

"If you don't believe what I'm telling you, go out on deck and see if you can't hear the Hedge Fence whistle," advised the mate sourly. "If she don't bear south of east I'll eat that suit they're drying out for me. And that will show you that you're two miles to the norrard of where you ought to be."

On his way to the pilot house, Captain Mayo did hear the hollow voice of the distant whistle, with its double blast and its long interval of silence. The sound came from abaft his beam, and his disquietude increased.

Then the acute realization was forced in upon him that he had the general manager of the line to face. The captain had not caught sight of his superior during the excitement; he wondered now why Mr. Fogg had effaced himself so carefully.

The red coal of a cigar glowed in a corner of the pilot house. From that corner came curt inquiry:

"Well, Captain Mayo, what have you got to say about this?"

"I think I'll do my talking after I have had daylight on the proposition, sir."

"Don't you have any idea how you happened to be off your course so far?" asked Fogg, his anxiety noticeable in his tones.

"How do you know I was off my course?"

"Well—er—why, well, you wouldn't be aground, would you, if you hadn't lost your way?"

"I didn't lose my way, Mr. Fogg."

"What did happen, then?"

"That's for me to find out!"

"I'm not going to say anything to you yet, Captain Mayo. It's too sudden—too big a blow. It's going to paralyze the Vose line."

Mr. Fogg said this briskly, as if he were passing small talk on the weather.

"I'm thankful that you're taking the thing so calmly, sir. I've been dreading to meet you."

"Oh, a business man in these days can't allow himself to fly to pieces over setbacks. Optimism is half the battle."

But Stanley Mayo, sitting there in that dark pilot house for the rest of the night, staring out into the blank wall of the fog and surveying the wreck of his hopes, was decidedly not optimistic.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BITTER PROOF BY MORNING LIGHT.

Morning brought to him neither cheer nor counsel.

The winds swept the fog off the seas, and the brightness of the sunshine only mocked the gloom of his thoughts.

He was most unmistakably far off his course. He took his bearings carefully, and he groped through his memory and his experience for reasons which would explain how he came to be away up there on Hedge Fence. Two of the masts of the sunken stone schooner showed above the sea, two depressing monuments of disaster.

He took further bearings and tested his compass with minute care. So far as he could determine it was correct to the dot.

It was a busy forenoon for all on board the steamer. The revenue cutters took off the passengers. Representatives of the underwriters came out from Wood's Hole on a tug. The huge *Montana*, set solidly into its bed of sand, loomed against the sky, mute witness of somebody's inefficiency or mistake.

Late in the day Captain Mayo and General Manager Fogg locked themselves in the captain's cabin to have it out.

When the master had finished his statement, Mr. Fogg flicked the ash from his cigar, studied the glowing end for a time, and narrowed his eyes.

"So, summing it all up, it happened, and you don't know just how it happened. You were off your course, and don't know how you happened to be off your course. You don't expect us to defend you before the steamboat inspectors, with that for an explanation, Mayo?"

"All I can do is to tell the truth at the hearing, sir."

"They'll break you, sure as a mule wags ears. There are five dead men inside that wreck yonder. Don't you reckon you'll be indicted for manslaughter?"

"I shall claim that the collision was unavoidable."

"But you were off your course—were in a place you had no business to be in. That knocks your defense all to the devil. You are in almighty bad, Mayo. You must wake up to it."

The young man was pale and rigid and silent.

"The Vose line is in bad enough as it is, without trying to defend you. I suppose I'll be blamed for putting on a young captain. Mayo, I am older than you are and wiser about the law and such matters. Why don't you duck out from under, eh?"

"You mean run away?"

"I wouldn't put it quite as bluntly as that. I mean, go away and keep out of sight till it quiets down. If you stay they'll put you on the rack and get you all tangled up by firing questions at you. And what will you gain by going through the muss? You've got to agree with me that the inspectors will suspend you—revoke your license. Here's this steamer here, talking for herself. If you stay around under foot, and all the evidence is brought out at the hearing, then the Federal grand jury will take the thing up, probably. They'll have a manslaughter case against you."

Still Captain Mayo did not speak.

"If you simply drop out of sight, I don't believe they'll chase you. Personally, having watched you last night, I don't believe you are guilty of any very bad break. It simply happened wrong. We don't want all the notoriety a court trial would bring to the line. And here's what I'll do, Mayo. I'll slip you a few hundred for expenses so that you can go away and grab into the shipping game somewhere else. A fellow like you can land on his feet."

"Mr. Fogg, a renegade steamboat man stands a mighty poor show. I may be suspended, and worse may happen to me. But I'm not going to ruin myself and my good name by running away. That's confession! It's wrecking all my prospects forever—and I have worked too hard for what I've got. I'm going to stay here and face the music—tell my story like a man."

"It will make a fine story—and you have told me, yourself, that they are just waiting to make a smashing example of somebody," sneered Fogg. "You, a cub captain, broke the navigation rules last night by running at least fifteen knots in the fog. Your log and the testimony of your mates will show

that. I'm not blaming you, son, I'm showing you how it looks! You got off your course and rammed a schooner at anchor, and you didn't even stop to pick up her men. I saw that much. Mayo, the only sensible thing for you to do is to duck out from under. It will save the line from a lot of scandal and bad advertising. By gad, if you don't do that much for us, after the offer I've just made you, I'll go onto the stand and testify against you."

"You seem to be mighty ready and anxious to make me the goat in this thing," blazed the young man, his temper getting away from him. He had been without sleep for many hours, his soul had been crucified by the bitter experiences he had been through.

"Are you looking for a fight?"

"No, Mr. Fogg, I'm looking for a square deal. I haven't done anything intentionally to make me a fugitive from justice. I won't run away."

"You won't be the first witness who has helped big interests by keeping out of sight and out of reach of the lawyers. It's business, Mayo."

"It may be, Mr. Fogg. I don't know the inside of the big deals. I'm only a sailor. I associate with sailors. And I've got a little pride in my good name."

Mr. Fogg looked at this recalcitrant with scorn. He wanted to tell this stubborn individual that he was merely a two-spot in the big game which was being played. But the expression on Mayo's face encouraged neither levity nor sneers.

"I'll give you a thousand dollars expense money for your trip and will talk job with you next year after you get your license back," proffered the general manager.

Captain Mayo fixed flaming eyes on the tempter.

"What special, private reason have you got for wanting to bribe me?" demanded the young man with such heat that Fogg flinched. "You are making something very mysterious out of what should be open and aboveboard. That may be Wall Street tactics, Mr. Fogg, but it doesn't go with a sailor who has earned a master's papers and is proud of it."

"Well, pass on then," directed Fogg. "There's a tug alongside to take the underwriters back to Wood's Hole. Go along—to jail, or wherever it is you'll fetch up."

"I shall stay aboard this ship as her captain until I am relieved according to the formalities of the admiralty law," declared Captain Mayo, with dignity. "I don't propose to run away from duty or punishment, Mr. Fogg."

The general manager pursed a contemptuous mouth and departed from the cabin.

He went away on the tug, without further word to Mayo.

During the next two days small craft buzzed about the stricken giant like flies around a carcass. There were insurance men, wreckers with plans and projects, sight-seers, stockholders—and one visitor was Captain Zoradus Wass.

"Nothing else to do just now, boy, except to come and sympathize with you."

He clucked his tongue against his teeth as he looked the steamer over. It was condolence without words.

"Now tell me the story of it—with all the fine details," he demanded, after they were closeted in the captain's cabin.

He sat with elbows on his knees and gazed at the floor during the recital, and he continued to gaze at the floor for some time after Mayo had ceased speaking.

"I admit that the quartermaster let her off for just a minute—less than a minute," repeated the young man. "I had only just looked away for an instant. I helped him put her over. We couldn't have done more than cut a letter S for a few lengths. But the

more I think of it, the queerer it seems. Two points off, almost in a finger snap!"

"Tell that part of it over and over again, while I shut my eyes and get it fixed in my mind as if I had seen it," requested Captain Wass. "Who was there, where did they stand, and so forth and et cetry. When a thing happens and you can't figger it out, it's usually because you haven't pawed over the details carefully enough. Go ahead! I'm a good listener."

But after he had listened he had no comments to make.

He went out of the cabin after a few minutes' wait which was devoted to deep meditation and strolled about the ship, hands behind his back, scuffing his feet.

A half hour later, meeting Captain Mayo on his rounds, the veteran inquired: "How do you happen to have Oliver Burkett aboard here?"

"I don't know him."

"You ought to know him. He is the captain the Vose line fired off the *Nirvana* three years ago. He gave the go-ahead and a jingle when he was making dock and chewed up four fishing boats and part of the pier. He had to choose between admitting that he was drunk, crazy, or bribed by the opposition. And I guess they figured that he was all three. Was he aboard here the night it happened?"

"I don't know."

"According to my notion it's worth finding out," growled Captain Wass. "I'm not seeing very far into this thing as yet, son, and I'll admit it. But if dirty work was done to you, Burkett would have been a handier tool for Fogg than a Stillson wrench in a plumbing job. No, don't ask me questions now. I haven't got any consolation for you or confidence in myself. I'm only thinking."

The next day the wounded *Montana* was formally surrendered to the underwriters.

And Captain Stanley Mayo was ordered to appear before the United States inspectors.

CHAPTER X.

HOW PANIC SETS JUDGMENT A-WHIRLING.

Captain Wass came bustling down to the little hotel by the water front, plumping along at an extra rate of speed, setting his heels down hard, a moving monument of gloom.

His protégé, removing disconsolate gaze from the dusty chromos on the office walls, did not require verbal report; Captain Wass' demeanor told all.

"And you couldn't expect much of anything else," declared the old man. "I made the best talk I could for you after you had finished your testimony and had gone out. But it was no use, son! The department has been laying for a victim. Both of us have known that right along. They have soaked it to you good and proper."

"How long am I suspended for?" faltered Mayo.

"That's the point! Indefinitely. You were meat. Everybody watching the case. They trimmed you."

Mayo set his hands into his thick hair, propped his head, and stared at the floor.

"Indefinitely doesn't mean forever, but there ain't much comfort in that. I'll tell you what it does mean, boy. It means that if there has been crooked work we've got to show it up in order to reinstate you. And now get a good brace on yourself. I've taken a peek in at the United States court."

The young man, without lifting his head, gave the veteran a piteous side glance.

"Fletcher Fogg is buzzing around the outside of that hive. He has Burkett

along for an understrapper. They are marshaling in witnesses before the grand jury. Those men from the *Warren,* and you know what they'll say, of course! Your mates and quartermasters! Mayo, they're going to railroad you to Atlanta penitentiary. They have put something over on you because you are young, and they figured that you'd be a little green. It seemed queer to me when Fogg was so mighty nice to you all of a sudden. But they don't lay off a man like Jacobs and put in a new man just to be nice. They either felt they couldn't work Jacobs, or else they felt a green man would give 'em a good excuse for what happened."

"But they couldn't arrange to have a schooner——"

"That was probably more than they figured on. But as long as it has happened they're going to use it to best advantage. You're going to have both tin cans tied to you, son. Every cussed bit of influence is going to be used against you. Poor devils on the outside, like you and I, don't understand just how slick the ways can be greased. Mayo, I'm going to give you good advice. Duck out!"

"Run away like a confessed criminal? That's the advice Fogg gave me. I don't think your advice is good, Captain Wass. I won't run away."

"It may not be good advice. I ain't wise enough to know everything that's best. But if they put you behind the bars in Atlanta, son, you'll stay there till your term is up. No matter what is found out in your case, it will take money and a lot of time to get the truth before the right people. But if you ain't in prison, and we can get a line on this case and dig up even a part of the truth, then you've got a fighting chance in the open. If we can get just enough to make 'em afraid to put you onto the witness stand, that much may make 'em quit their barking. You're a sailor, boy! You know a sailor can't do much when his hands are tied. Stay outside the penitentiary and help me fight this thing."

"I don't know what to do," mourned the young man. "I'm all in a whirl. I'm no coward, Captain Wass. I'm willing to face the music. But I'm so helpless."

"Stay outside jail till the fog lifts a bit in this case," adjured his mentor. "Are you going to lie down and stick up your legs to have 'em tied, like a calf bound for market? Here are a few things you can do if you duck out of sight for a little while. I'll go ahead and——"

Suddenly he checked himself. He was facing the window, which commanded a considerable section of street. He wasted no further breath on good advice.

"I know those men coming down there," he cried. "They're bailiffs. I saw them around the courthouse. They're after you, Mayo. You run! Get away! There must be a back door here. Scoot!"

He pulled the unresisting scapegoat out of his chair and hustled him to the rear of the office.

A young man may have the best intentions. He may resolve to be a martyr, to bow to the law's majesty.

But at that moment Stanley Mayo was receiving imperious command from the shipmaster whose orders he had obeyed for so many years that obedience was second nature. And panic seized him! Men were at hand to arrest him. There was no time to reason the thing out. Flight is the first impulse of innocence persecuted. Manly resolve melted. He ran.

"I'll stay behind and bluff 'em off! I'll say you're just out for a minute, that I'm waiting here for you," cried Captain Wass. "That will give you a start. Try the docks. You may find one of the boys who will help."

Mayo escaped into a yard, dodged down an alley, planning his movements as he hurried, having a mariner's quickness of thought in an emergency.

He made directly for the pier where steam vessels took water. A huge ocean-going tug was just getting ready to leave her berth under the water hose. Her gruff whistle call had ordered hawsers cast off. Mayo's long coast acquaintance was extensive. This was a coal-barge tug, and he waved quick greeting to the familiar face in her pilot house and leaped aboard. He climbed the forward ladder nimbly.

"I reckon you'll have to make it hello and good-by in one breath, mate," advised the skipper. "I'm off to take a light tow down coast—Norfolk next stop."

"Let her go—sooner the better," gasped the fugitive; "I'll explain why as soon as you are out of the dock."

"You don't say that you want to take the trip?"

"I've got to take it."

The skipper cocked an eyebrow and pulled his bell.

"Make yourself to home, mate," he advised. "I hope you ain't in so much of a hurry to get there as you seem to be, for I've got three barges to tow."

Mayo sat down on the rear transom and was hidden from all eyes on the pier.

There was no opportunity for an explanation until the barges had been picked up, for there was much maneuvering and much tooting. But he found ready sympathy after he had explained.

"The law sharps are always hankering to catch a poor cuss who is trying to navigate these waters and suit the inspectors and the owners at the same time," admitted the master of the tug. "I have read everything the papers had to say about your case, and I figured they didn't give you a fair show. Newspapers and lawyers and owners don't understand what a fellow is up against. I'm glad you're aboard, mate, because I want to hear your side, with all the details."

The threshing over of the matter occupied many hours of the long wallow down the Jersey coast, and the tug captain weighed all features of the case with the care of a man who has plenty of time on his hands and with the zest a mariner displays in considering the affairs of his ilk.

"If I didn't know you pretty well, Mayo, and know what kind of a man you got your training with, I might think—just as those law sharps will probably say—that you were criminally careless or didn't know your business. But that dodge she made on you! Two points off her course! You've got to put your finger right on there and hold it! Let me tell you something. It was a queer thing in my case. That was a queer thing in your case. Stand two queer things in our business up beside each other and squint at 'em and you may learn something."

"She was on her course—I put her there with my own hands," persisted Mayo.

"Sure! You know your business. If this thing was going to be left to the bunch that know you, you'd go clear. But here's what happened in my case: I had a new man in the wheelhouse, here, and he almost rammed me into Cuttyhunk, gave me a touch and go with the Pollock Rip Lightship, and had me headed toward Nauset when the fog lifted. And he was steering my courses to the thinness of a hair, at that! Say, I took a sudden tumble, and frisked that chap and dragged a toad-stabber knife out of his pocket—one of those regular foot-long knives. It had been yawing off that compass all the way from a point to a point and a half. When did you shift wheel watch?"

"Before we made Vineyard Sound."

"And no trouble coming up the sound?"

"Made Nobska and West Chop to the dot."

"Then perhaps your general manager, who was in that pilot house, had an iron gizzard inside him. Most of them Wall Street fellows do have!" said the skipper, with sarcasm.

"There's something going on in the steamboat business that I can't understand," declared Mayo. "It's high up—it hasn't to do with us chaps, who have to take the kicks. Fogg brought a man aboard the old *Nequasset*, and he didn't bring along a good explanation to go with that man. I have been wondering ever since how it happened that Fogg got to be general manager of the Vose line so almighty sudden."

"Them high financiers play a big game, mate. And if you happened to be a marked card in it, they'd tear you up and toss you under the table without thinking twice. If you'll take a tip from me, you lay low and do a lot of thinking while Uncle Zoradus does his scouting. What are you going to do when you get to Norfolk?"

"I haven't thought."

"Well, the both of us better think, and think hard, mate. If the United States is really after you, there'll be a sharp eye at every knot hole. I can't afford to let 'em get in a crack at me for what I have done."

"I'll jump overboard outside the capes before I'll put you in wrong," asserted Mayo, with deep feeling.

That night the captain of the tug took a trick at the wheel in person.

His guest lay on the transom, smoking the skipper's spare pipe, and racking his mind for ways and means. After a time he was conscious that the captain was growling a bit of a song to relieve the tedium of his task. He sang the same words over and over—a tried and true Chesapeake chantey:

"Oh, I sailed aboard a lugger, and I shipped aboard a scow,
And I sailed aboard a peanut shell that had a razor bow.
Needle in a haystack, brick into a wall!
A nigger man in Norfolk, he ain't no 'count at all!"

Mayo rolled off the transom and went to the captain's side.

"There's more truth than poetry in that song of yours, sir," he said. "You have given me an idea. A nigger in Norfolk doesn't attract much attention. And I haven't got to be one of the black ones, either. Don't you suppose there's something aboard here I can use to stain my face with?"

"My cook is a great operator as a tattoo artist."

"I don't think I want to make the disguise permanent, sir," stated the young man, with a smile.

"What I mean is, he may have something in his kit that he can use to paint you with. What's your idea—stay there? I'm afraid they'll nail you."

"I'll stay there just long enough to ship before the mast on a schooner. There isn't time to think up any better plan just now. Anything to keep out of sight until I can make up my mind about what's really best to be done."

"We'll have that cook up here," offered the captain. "He's safe."

The cook took prompt and professional interest in the matter.

"Sure!" he said. "I've got a stain that will sink in and stay put for a long time, if no grease paint is used. Only you mustn't wash your face."

"There's no danger of a fellow having any inducement to do that when he's before the mast on a schooner in these days," declared the tug captain dryly.

An hour later, Captain Stanley Mayo, late of the crack liner *Montana*, was a very passable mulatto, his crisply curling hair adding to the disguise. He swapped his neat suit of brown with a deck hand, and received some particularly unkempt garments.

The next night, when the tug was berthed at the water station, he slipped off into the darkness, as homeless and as disconsolate as an abandoned dog.

CHAPTER XI.

A PASSENGER WITH SPECIAL AND VERY PRIVATE BUSINESS.

Captain Mayo kept out of the region of the white lights for some time.

He had a pretty wide acquaintance in the Virginia port, and he knew the beaten paths of the steamboating transients, ashore for a bit of a blow.

He lurked in alleys, feeling especially disreputable. He was not at all sure that his make-up was effective. His own self-consciousness convinced him that he was a glaring fraud, whose identity would be revealed promptly to any person who knew him.

But while he sneaked in the purlieus of the city, several of his 'longshore friends passed him without a second look. One, a second engineer on a Union line freighter, whirled, after passing, and came back to him.

"Got a job, boy?"

"No, sir."

"We need coal passers on the *Drummond*. She's in the stream. Come aboard in the morning."

But it was not according to Mayo's calculations, messing with steamboat men.

"Ah doan' conclude Ah wants no sech job," he drawled.

"No, of course you don't want to work, you blasted yaller mutt!" snapped the engineer.

He marched on, cursing, and Mayo was encouraged, for the man had given him a thorough looking over.

He went out onto the wider streets.

He was looking for a roving schooner captain, reckoning he would know one of that gentry by the cut of his jib.

A ponderous man came stumping down the sidewalk, swinging his shoulders.

"He's one of 'em," decided Mayo. The round-crowned soft hat, undented, the flapping trouser legs, the gait recognized readily by one who has ever seen a master mariner patrol his quarter-deck, all these marked him as a safe man to tackle. He stopped, dragged a match against the brick side of a building, and relighted his cigar. But before Mayo could reach him a colored man hurried up and accosted the big gentleman, whipping off his hat and bowing with smug humility. Mayo hung up at a little distance. He recognized the colored man; he was one of the numerous Norfolk runners who furnish crews for vessels. He wore pearl-gray trousers, a tailed coat, and had a pink in his buttonhole.

"Ah done have to say that Ah doan' get that number seven man up to now, Cap'n Downs, though I have squitulate for him all up and down. But Ah done expect——"

Captain Downs scowled over his scooped hands, puffing hard at his cigar. He threw away the match.

"Look-a-here, you've been chasing me two days with new stories about that seventh man. Haven't you known me long enough to know that you can't trim me for another fee?"

"Cap'n Downs, you done know yo'-self the present lucidateness of the sailorman supply.

"I know that if you don't get that man aboard my schooner to-night or the first thing to-morrow morning, you'll never put another one aboard for me. You go hustle! And, look here! I see you making up your mouth! Not another cent!"

The colored man backed off and went away.

Mayo accosted the captain when that fuming gentleman came lunging along the sidewalk.

"Ah done lak to have that job, cap'n," he pleaded.

"You a sailor?"

"Yas, sir."

"How is it you ain't hiring through the regular runners?"

"Ah doan' lak to give all my money to a dude nigger to go spotein' on."

"Well, there's something in that," acknowledged Captain Downs, softening a bit. "I haven't got much use for that kind myself. You come along. But if you ain't A 1, shipshape, and seamanlike and come aboard my vessel to loaf on your job you'll wish you were in tophet with the torches lighted. Got any dunnage laying around anywhere?"

"No, sir."

"Well, then, I guess you're a regular sailor, all right, the way the breed runs nowadays. That sounds perfectly natural."

The captain led the way down to a public landing, where a power yawl, with engineer and a mate, was in waiting.

"Will she go into the stream to-night, Mr. Dodge?" asked Captain Downs curtly.

"No, sir! About four hundred tons still to come."

Schooner captains keep religiously away from their vessels as long as the crafts lie at the coal docks.

"Come up for me in the morning as soon as she is in the stream. Here's a man to fill the crew. If that coon shows up with another man kick the two of 'em up the wharf."

"Will the passenger come aboard with you, sir?"

"He called me up at the hotel about supper time and said something about wanting to come aboard at the dock. I tried to tell him it was foolish, but it's safe to reckon that a man who wants to sail as passenger from here to Boston on a coal schooner is a fool, anyway. If he shows up, let him come aboard."

Captain Downs swung away, and the night closed in behind him.

Mayo took his place in the yawl and preserved meek and proper silence during the trip down the harbor.

When they swung under the counter of the schooner which was their destination, the young man noted that she was the *Drusilla M. Alden*, a five-master, of no very enviable record along the coast, so far as the methods and manners of her master went; Mayo had heard of her master, whose nickname was "Old Mull." He had not recognized him under the name of Captain Downs, when the runner had addressed him.

The new member of the crew followed the mate up the ladder—only a few steps, for the huge schooner, with most of her cargo aboard, showed less than ten feet of freeboard amidships.

"Sleepy, George?" asked the mate, when they were on deck.

"No, sir."

"Then you may as well go on this watch."

"Yass'r!"

"We'll call it now eight bells midnight. You'll go off watch eight bells morning."

Mayo knew that the hour was not much later than eleven, but he did not protest; he knew something about the procedure aboard coastwise coal schooners.

Searchlights bent steady glare upon the chutes down which rushed the streams of coal, black dust swirling in the white radiance. The great pockets at Lambert Point are never idle. High above, on the railway, trains of coal cars racketed. Under his feet the fabric of the vessel trembled as the chutes fed her through the three hatches. Sweating, coal-blackened men toiled in the depths of her, revealed below hatches by the electric lights, pecking at the avalanche with their shovels, trimming cargo.

The young man exchanged a few listless words with the two negroes who were on deck, his mates of the watch. They were plainly not interested in him, and he avoided them.

The hours dragged. He helped to close and batten the fore hatch, and later performed similar service on the hatch aft. The main hatch continued to gulp the black food which the chute fed to it.

Suddenly a tall young man appeared to Mayo. The stranger was smartly dressed, and his spick-and-span garb contrasted strangely with the general riot of dirt aboard the schooner. He trod gingerly over the dust-coated planks, and carried two suit cases.

"Here, George," he commanded. "Take these to my stateroom."

Mayo hesitated.

"I'm going as passenger," said the young man impatiently, and Mayo remembered what the captain had told the mate. Passengers on coal schooners, sailing as friends of the master, were not unknown on the coast, but Mayo judged, from what he had heard, that this person was not a friend and had wondered a bit.

"I am not allowed to go aft, sir, without orders from the mate."

"Where is the mate?"

"I think he is below, sir."

"Asleep?"

"I wouldn't wonder."

Mayo did not trouble to use his dialect on this stranger, a mere passenger, who spoke as if he were addressing a car porter. The tone produced instant irritation, resentment in the man who had so recently been master of his ship.

The passenger set down his baggage and pondered a moment. He looked Mayo over in calculating fashion; he stared up the wharf.

Then he picked up his bags and hurried along the port alley and disappeared down the companionway.

He returned in a few moments, came into the waist of the vessel, and made careful survey of all about him. There were two sailors far forward, merely dim shadows. For some reason, general conditions on the schooner seemed to satisfy the stranger.

"The thing is breaking about right—about as I reckoned it would," he said aloud. "Look here, George, how much talking do you do about things you see?"

"Talking to who, sir?"

"Why, to your boss—the captain—the mate."

"A sailor before the mast is pretty careful not to say anything to a captain or the mates unless they speak to him first, sir."

"George, I'm not going to do anything but what is perfectly all right, you understand. You'll not get into any trouble over it. But what you don't see you can't tell, no matter if questions are asked later on. Here, take this!" He crowded two silver dollars into Mayo's hand, and gave him a push.

"You trot forward and stay there about five minutes, that's the boy! It's all right. It's a little of my own private business. Go ahead!"

Mayo went. He reflected that it was none of his affair what a passenger did aboard the vessel. It was precious little interest he took in the craft, anyway, except as a temporary refuge. He turned away, and put the money in his pocket, the darkness hiding his smile.

He did not look toward the wharf. He strolled on past the forward house, where the engineer was shown through the open door, stoking his boiler, getting up steam for the schooner's windlass engine. When he patrolled aft again, after a conscientious wait, he found the passenger leaning against the coach-house door, smoking a cigarette. The electric light showed his face, and it wore a look of peculiar satisfaction.

Just then some one fumbled inside

the coach-house door at the stranger's back, and when the latter stepped away the first mate appeared, yawning.

"I'm the passenger, Mr. Bradish," the young man explained promptly. "I just made myself at home, put my stuff in a stateroom, and locked the door and took the key. Is that all right?"

"May be just as well to lock it while we're at dock and stevedores are aboard," agreed the mate.

"How soon do we pull out of here?"

The mate yawned again, and peered up into the sky, where the first gray of the summer dawn was showing over the cranes of the coal pockets.

"In about a half hour, I should say. Just as soon as the tug can use daylight to put us into the stream."

The roar of the coal in the main-hatch chute had ceased. The schooner was loaded.

"Go strike eight bells, Jeff, and turn in!" ordered the mate, speaking to Mayo.

"Well, I'll stay outside, here, and watch the sun rise," said Bradish. "It will be a new experience."

"It's an almighty dirty place for loafing till we get into the stream and clean ship, sir. I should think taking an excursion on a coal lugger would be another new experience!" There was just a hint of grim sarcasm in his tone.

"The doctor ordered me to get out and away where I wouldn't hear of business or see business, and a friend of mine told me there were plenty of room and comfort aboard one of these big schooners. That cabin and the staterooms—they're fine!"

"Oh, they have to give a master a good home these days. That's a Wilton carpet in the saloon," declared the mate, with pride. "And we've got a one-eyed cook who can certainly sling grub together. Yes, for a cheap vacation I donno but a schooner is all right!"

The two were getting on most amicably when Mayo went forward.

He was dog tired, and turned in on the bare boards of his fo'cas'le berth.

No bedding is furnished men before the mast on the coal carriers.

If a man wants anything between himself and the boards he must bring it with him, and few do so. At the end of each trip a crew is discharged and new men are hired, in order to save paying wages while a vessel is in port loading or discharging. Therefore, a coastwise schooner harbors only transients, for whom the fo'cas'le is merely a shelter between watches.

But Mayo was a sailor, and the bare boards served him better than bedding in which some dusky and dirty son of Ham had nestled. He laid himself down and slept soundly.

The second mate turned out the watch below at four bells—six in the morning. The schooner was in the stream, and all hands were needed to work hose and brooms and clear off the coal dust. Mayo toiled in the wallow of black water till his muscles ached.

There was one happy respite—they knocked off long enough to eat breakfast. It was set out to them from the cook house in one huge, metal pan, without dishes or knives or forks.

A white cook wash dishes for negroes?

Mayo knew the custom which prevailed on board the schooners between the coal ports and the New England cities, and while he fished for food with his fingers and cut meat with his jack-knife he amused himself and forgot his own humiliation by pondering on what that one-eyed dyspeptic in the galley would say if a man in the frowsy crew presumed to suggest as much.

He had had experiences of his own with the touchy tempers of sea cooks.

When he was back at his scrubbing again, the cook passed aft, bearing the zinc-lined hamper which contained the breakfast for the cabin table. That this cook had the complete vocabulary

of others of his ilk was revealed when the man with the hose narrowly missed drenching the hamper.

"That's right, cook!" roared Captain Downs, climbing ponderously on board from his yawl. "Talk up to the loafing, cock-eyed, pot-colored sons of a coal scuttle when I ain't here to do it. Turn away that hose, you mule-eared Fiji!"

He turned on Mayo, who stood at one side and was poising his scrubbing broom to allow the master to pass.

"Get to work, there, yellow pup! Get to work!"

Ordinarily, the skipper addresses one of his sailors only through the mate. But there was no mate handy just then.

"One hand for the owners and one hand for yourself when you're aloft, but on deck it's both hands for the owners," he stated, as he plodded aft, giving forth the aphorism for the benefit of all within hearing.

The passenger was still on deck, and Mayo heard Captain Downs greet him rather brusquely.

Then the cook's hand bell announced breakfast, and before the captain and his guest reappeared on deck a tug had the *Alden's* hawser, and was towing her down the dredged channel on the way to Hampton Roads and to sea.

CHAPTER XII.

BUT NO PARSON WAS CAPTAIN DOWNS.

In spite of the fact that all his experience had been gained on board steam crafts, Mayo went at his new tasks so handily that he passed muster as an able seaman. If a sailor aboard a big schooner of these days is quick, willing, and strong he does not need the qualities and the knowledge which made a man an "A. B." in the old times.

While the schooner was on her way behind the tug they hoisted her sails, a long cable called "the messenger" enabling the steam winch forward to do all the work. Mayo was assigned to the jigger mast, and went aloft to shake out the topsail. It was a dizzy height, and the task tried his spirit, for the sail was heavy, and he found it difficult to keep his balance while he was tugging at the folds of the canvas. He was obliged to work alone—there was only one man to a mast, and very tiny insects did his mates appear when Mayo glanced forward along the range of the masts.

The tug dropped them off the Tail of the Horseshoe; a smashing sou'-wester was serving them.

With all her washing set, the schooner went plowing out past the capes, and Mayo was given his welcome watch below; he was so sleepy that his head swam.

When he turned out, he was ordered to take his trick at the wheel. The schooner had made her offing, and was headed for her northward run along the coast, which showed as a thin thread of white along the flashing blue of the sea.

Mayo took the course from the gaunt, sooty Jamaican, who stepped away from the wheel; he set his gaze on the compass and had plenty to occupy his hands and his mind, for a big schooner which is logging off six or eight knots in a following sea is somewhat of a proposition for a steersman. Occasionally he was obliged to climb bodily upon the wheel in order to hold the vessel up to her course.

Captain Downs was pacing steadily from rail to rail between the wheel and the house. At each turn he glanced up for a squint at the sails. It was the regular patrol of a schooner captain.

In spite of his absorption in his task, Mayo could not resist taking an occasional swift peep at the passenger. The young man's demeanor had become so peculiar that it attracted attention. He looked worried, ill at ease, smoked his cigarettes nervously, flung over the rail

one which he had just lighted, and started for the captain, his mouth open. Then he turned away, shielded a match under the hood of the companionway, and touched off another cigarette. He was plainly wrestling with a problem that distressed him very much.

At last he hurried below. He came up almost immediately. He had the air of a man who had made up his mind to have a disagreeable matter over with.

"Captain Downs," he blurted, stepping in front of Old Mull, and halting that astonished skipper, "will you please step down into the cabin with me for a few moments? I've something to tell you."

"Well, tell it—tell it here!" barked the captain.

"It's very private, sir!"

"I don't know of any privater place than this quarter-deck, fifteen miles offshore."

"But the—the man at the wheel!"

"Good Josephus! That ain't a man! That's a nigger sailor steering my schooner. Tell your tale, Mr. Bradish. Tell it right here. That fellow don't count any more'n that rudderhead counts."

"If you could step down into the cabin, I——"

"My place is on this quarter-deck, sir. If you've got anything to say to me, say it!" He began to pace again.

Bradish caught step, after a scuff or two.

"I hope you're going to take this thing right, Captain Downs. It may sound queer to you at first," he stammered.

"Well, well, well, tell it to me—tell it! Then I will let you know whether it sounds queer or not."

"I brought another passenger on board with me. She is locked in a stateroom."

Old Mull stopped his patrol with a jerk.

"She?" he demanded. "You mean to tell me you've got a woman aboard here?"

"We're engaged—we want to get married. So she came along——"

"Then why in tophet didn't ye go get married? You don't think this is a parsonage, do you?"

"There were reasons why we couldn't get married ashore. You have to have licenses, and questions are asked, and we were afraid it would be found out before we could arrange it."

"So this is an elopement, hey?"

"Well, the young lady's father has foolish ideas about a husband for his daughter, and she doesn't agree with him."

"Who is her father?"

"I don't intend to tell you, sir. That hasn't anything to do with the matter."

Captain Downs looked his passenger up and down with great disfavor.

"And what's your general idea in loading yourselves onto me in this fashion?"

"You have the right, as captain of a ship outside the three-mile limit, to marry folks in an emergency."

"I ain't sure that I've got any such right—and I ain't at all certain about the emergency, Mr. Bradish. I ain't going to stick my head into a scrape."

"But there can't be any scrape for you. You simply exercise your right, and marry us, and enter it in your log and give us a paper. It will be enough of a marriage so that we can't be separated."

"Want to hold a hand you can bluff her father with, hey? I don't approve of any such tactics in matrimony."

"I wouldn't be doing this if there were any other safe way for us," protested Bradish earnestly. "I'm no cheap fellow. I hold down a good job, sir. But the trouble is I work for her father—and you know how it always is in a case like that. He can't see me!"

"Rich, eh?"

"Yes," admitted the young man. "Captain Downs," he pleaded, "can't you see that under the circumstances her father will be glad that you married us, so that there will be no gossip? If it gets into the papers, it won't be called an elopement. We'll give out a statement simply saying that we decided on it as a rather original way of getting away and avoiding the fuss of a church wedding."

"Rehearsing the stuff on me that you used on the girl, hey?" inquired the captain sourly. "Well, it don't go! What's her name?"

Bradish hesitated.

"How could I marry her to you if I didn't know her name?"

"Her name is Alma Marston, sir."

"Guess it's nobody I ever heard of," admitted Captain Downs, with the air of one who was thoroughly posted on the social roster, and was wondering how this particular individual had escaped him.

To Mayo at the wheel, listening with interest that he could not repress, the name conveyed nothing.

"We're in a terrible position, captain. But we were desperate. Perhaps it wasn't a very wise thing to do. But it will come out all right if you will marry us. Didn't you intimate just now that you might change your mind, and do it?"

"Not by a blame sight, sir! Furthermore, I wouldn't take a chance in marrying off any girl when I don't know who her father is. He might be an owner into this schooner, for all I know. Then where would I get off?"

"You can be perfectly sure that he owns no schooner property," declared Bradish dryly. "He's most distinctly on the other side of the fence."

The captain blinked, curiosity gleaming in his eyes.

"Captain Downs," proceeded Bradish, "I didn't realize that you would be so touchy on the subject. I reckoned that you would marry us. I could not see how it would make much difference to you. But I understand your position, and I'm going to come right out and show my hand—the whole of it, so that you can be sure that I'm on the level with you. Man to man, for Heaven's sake, help me when you see that I'm square with you!"

He looked apprehensively at the man at the wheel, and halted.

"Don't mind that nigger, I tell ye! Who is her father?"

"John Adams Marston, sir. You've heard of him, probably?"

"Heard of him!" bawled Old Mull. "Heard of that Wall Street gouger, who has knocked the bottom out of schooner property on this coast with his steamboat combinations and his dicker deals? I should say I had heard of him—me and this schooner hung up for two months this summer waiting for a charter."

A queer tingle of interest thrilled in Mayo. So this was the girl who had been suggested to him in an awkward frolic of the caustic humor of Captain Zoradus Wass! It was a far-fetched jest, which had been merely a bit of pilot-house banter; he had forgotten the subject as soon as the words were out of Captain Wass' mouth. That this girl was now crossing his path in such amazing fashion made him marvel mightily.

"So old Marston don't want you to have her, hey?"

"I haven't talked it over with him, Captain Downs; but you understand how bull-headed a rich man is in matters of this kind. I'm active and enterprising, and I have been his right-hand man as a clerk. He ought to be glad to have me as a son-in-law. I'll be a handy man for him. He'll find it out after he gets cooled down."

"But just now it'll rasp him like blazes to have you steal his girl, eh?"

"I don't consider it stealing," protested Bradish. "We're in love, and

we want to get married. A fellow has to make his own way in the world, and I am not the first chap to see a good thing, and grab it. And if John Adams Marston gets too nasty over this thing I know enough about his system and his operations to put him in jail. But I'm no blackmailer, sir. I'm simply looking out for myself."

"Yes, that seems to be pretty fashionable among you financing fellows nowadays," commented Old Mull. "Bradish, you ain't fooling me very much in this matter. I don't say but what you like that girl. But I've been looking at you while you've been talking, and I can see that you're one of them sharpers who don't care very much how they get a thing, as long's they get it. I'm a pretty good judge of men, and you have let yourself out once or twice. How have you been able to fool her?"

It was a blunt and decidedly insulting inquiry, and Bradish flushed. But he plainly did not have the courage to make retort.

"We met at dances—we were attracted to each other," he said meekly.

"Huh! They tell me girls are crazy over hoofshaking these days, and I suppose that leads to insanity in general," commented Old Mull, with disgust. "What you and that girl have done, Bradish, is plain and simple lunacy. A fellow who was really in love with a good girl wouldn't allow her to cut up such a caper, much less encourage her in doing it."

He stuck an unlighted cigar into his mouth, and begun his patrol, muttering.

Bradish leaned against the house, studying the ends of his fingers, sullen, sour, and scowling.

"Look here," called the captain, "it's cruelty to animals, keeping that girl locked up in that stateroom all this time."

"Miss Marston didn't care to come out till I had had a talk with you. I have spoken to her through the door a few times. I want to call your attention to the fact, sir, that I have observed all the proprieties." He tried to be dignified.

Captain Downs snorted.

"Proprieties—poosh! You have got her into a nice scrape! And she's down there locked in like a cat, and probably starving!"

"She doesn't care to eat. I think she isn't feeling very well."

"I shouldn't think she would! Go bring her up here, where she can get some fresh air. I'll talk to her."

After a moment's hesitation, Bradish went below.

He returned in a little while.

In spite of his efforts to pretend obliviousness, Mayo stared hard at the companionway, eager to look on the face of John Marston's daughter.

But she did not follow her lover.

"Miss Marston doesn't feel well enough to come on deck," reported Bradish. "But she is in the saloon. Captain Downs, won't you go and talk to her, and say something to make her feel easy in her mind? She is very nervous. She is frightened."

"I'm not much of a ladies' man," stated Old Mull. But he pulled off his cap and smoothed his grizzled hair.

"And if you could only say that you're going to help us!" pleaded the lover. "We throw ourselves on your mercy, sir."

"I ain't much good as a life raft in this love business."

He started for the companionway.

"But don't tell her that you will not marry us—not just now. Wait till she is calmer."

"Oh, I shan't tell her! Don't worry! Because," said Captain Downs, with a grim set to his mouth, "I may conclude to hand John Adams Marston one good crack to pay for all the kicks he has given me and the other folks in the schooner business."

He disappeared down the steps, and Bradish followed. A mate had come aft, obeying the master's hand flourish, and he took up the watch. In a little while Mayo was relieved. He went forward, conscious that he was irritated and disappointed because he had not seen John Marston's daughter, and wondering just a bit at his interest in that young lady.

CHAPTER XIII.

AND CAPTAIN MAYO TURNED DOWN HIS THUMBS.

An hour later, Mayo, coiling down lines in the alley outside the engine room, overheard a bulletin delivered by the one-eyed cook to the engineer.

The cook had trotted forward, his sound eye bulging out and thus mutely expressing much astonishment.

"There's a dame aft. I've been making tea and toast for her."

"Well, you act as if it was the first woman you'd ever seen. What's the special excitement about a skirt going along as passenger?"

"She wa'n't expected to be aboard. I heard the old man talking with her. The dude that's passenger has rung her in somehow. I didn't get all the drift because the old man only sort of purred while I was in hearing distance. But I caught enough to know that it ain't according to schedule."

"Good looker?" The engineer was showing a bit of interest.

"She sure is!" declared the cook, demonstrating that one eye is as handy, sometimes, as two. "Peaches and cream, molasses-candy hair, hands as white as pastry flour. Looks good enough to eat."

"Nobody would ever guess you are a cook, hearing you describe a girl," sneered the engineer.

"There's a mystery about her. I heard her kind of taking on before the dude hushed her up. She was saying something about being sorry that she had come, and that she wished she was back, and that she had always done things on the impulse, and didn't stop to think, and so forth, and couldn't the ship be turned around."

Mayo forgot himself. He stopped coiling ropes, and stood there and listened eagerly until the cook's indignant eye chanced to take a swing in his direction.

"Do you see who's standing there, butting in on the private talk of two gents?" he asked the engineer. "Hand me that grate poker—the hot one. I'll show that nigger where he belongs."

But Mayo retreated in a hurry, knowing that he was not permitted to protest either by word or look. However, the cook had given him something else beside an insult—he had retailed gossip which kept the young man's thoughts busy for many hours.

In spite of his rather contemptuous opinion of the wit of a girl who would hazard such a silly adventure, he found himself pitying her plight, guessing that she was really sorry. But as to what was going on in the master's cabin he had no way of ascertaining. He wondered whether Captain Downs really meant to marry the couple in such equivocal fashion in order to get back at John Marston; the threat had been rather grim, and he knew that old sea captains are often headstrong in satisfying a grudge.

At any rate, pondered Mayo, how did it happen to be any affair of his? He had troubles enough of his own to occupy his sole attention.

Their spanking wind from the sou'-west let go just as dusk shut down. A yellowish scud dimmed the stars. Mayo heard one of the mates say that the glass had dropped. He smelled nasty weather, himself, having the sailor's keen instinct. The topsails were ordered in, and he climbed aloft and had

a long, lone struggle before he got the heavy canvas folded and lashed.

When he reached the deck, a mate commanded him to fasten the canvas covers over the skylights of the house. The work brought him within range of the conversation which Captain Downs and Bradish were carrying on, pacing the deck together.

"Of course, I don't want to throw down Mr. Marston, captain," Bradish was saying. There was an obsequious note in his voice; it was the tone of a man who was affecting confidential cordiality in order to get on—to win a favor. "But I have a lot of sympathy for you and for the rest of the schooner people. I have been right there in the office, and have had a finger in the pie, and I've seen what has been done in a good many cases. Of course, you understand, this is all between us! I'm not giving away any of the office secrets to be used against Mr. Marston. But I'm willing to show that I'm a friend of yours. And I know you'll be a friend of mine, and keep mum. All is, you can get wise from what I tell you, and can keep your eyes peeled from now on."

Mayo heard fragmentary explanation of how the combination of barge interests had operated to leave only pickings to the schooners. The two men were tramping the deck together, and at the turns were too far away from him to be heard distinctly.

"But they're putting over the biggest job of all just now," proceeded Bradish. "Confound it, Captain Downs, I'm not to be blamed for running away with John Marston's daughter, after watching him operate as long as I have. His motto is, 'Go after it when you see a thing you want in this world.' I've been trained to that system. I've got just as much right to go after a thing as John Marston has. I'm treasurer of the Paramount—that's the trust with which they intend to smash the opposition. My job is to ask no questions and to sign checks when they tell me to, and Heaven only knows what kind of a goat it will make of me if they ever have a showdown in the courts! They worked some kind of a shenanigan to grab off the Vose line; I wired a pot of money to Fletcher Fogg, who was doing the dirty work, and it was paid to a clerk to work proxies at the annual meeting. And then Fogg put up some kind of a job on a greenhorn captain—worked a flip trick on the fellow and made him shove the *Montana* onto the sands. I suppose they'll have the Vose line at their price before I get back. I don't know whether Mr. Marston will feel like asking me to sit down and sign the check or not," he added, with a nervous laugh. "But I've got a few things to remind him of."

Stanley Mayo sat there in the shadow, squatting on legs which trembled.

This babbler—out and away from the thrall of the Marston & Waller offices—tongue loosened by his new liberty and by the antagonism his small nature was developing against John Marston, anticipating his employer's enmity—had dropped a word of what Mayo knew must be the truth. It had been a trick—and Fletcher Fogg had worked it! And, as a result of that trick, an honest man had been ruined and blacklisted, deprived of opportunity to work in his profession, was a fugitive, a despised sailor, kicked to the very bottom of the ladder he had climbed so patiently and honorably.

Furious passion bowled over Mayo's prudence. He leaped down from the top of the house, and presented himself in front of the two men.

"I heard it—I couldn't help hearing it—and it's my business," he stuttered.

"Here's a nigger gone crazy!" yelped Captain Downs. "Ahoy, there, for'ard! Tumble aft with a rope!"

"I'm no nigger, and I'm not crazy!" shouted Mayo. "I'm the man that trick

was played on, Captain Downs. I'm Captain Mayo, of the *Montana!*"

The swinging lantern in the companionway lighted him dimly. But in the gloom his dusky hue was only the more accentuated. His excitement seemed that of a man whose wits had been touched.

"I knew it was a trick. But what was the trick?" he demanded, starting toward Bradish, his clutching hands outspread.

Captain Downs kicked at this obstreperous sailor, and, at the same time, fanned a blow at his head with open palm. Mayo avoided both the foot and the hand.

"What does the law say about striking a sailor, captain? Hold on, there! I'm just as good a man as you are. Don't you tell those men to lay hands on me." He backed away from the sailors who came running aft with the second mate marshaling them.

He stripped up his sleeve and held his arm across the radiance of the binnacle light.

"That's a white man's skin, isn't it?" he demanded.

"What kind of play acting is all this?" asked Old Mull, with astonished indignation.

"I've been broken, tricked, fooled. They tied a can to me. They made me their goat in their stock manipulation, sir. You know the case. And I just overheard what this man said about it. I'm Captain Mayo, and I want you to help me."

"You're Captain Mayo—like the blazes you are!" skeptically insisted the master of the *Alden*. "What are you doing here before the mast?"

"Running away from a bunch of infernal pirates, and I've just stubbed my toe over one of 'em by accident," declared Mayo, pointing to Bradish.

"You're lying!" said the intractable Downs. "And you're a lunatic, into the bargain. Grab that critter and tie him up!"

Mayo backed to the rail rack and pulled two belaying pins, each a mighty weapon.

"I'll show you whether I'm a sea captain or not, if you let those niggers lay their paws on me. You're going to be sorry, sir, if you don't let me show you that I'm exactly what I say I am!"

Captain Downs took a squint at the bared arm, and surveyed his sailor with more careful scrutiny.

"You go around and come into the for'ard cabin through the coach house," he commanded at last. "I'll have a word with you."

Mayo replaced the pins, and obeyed.

"Here are my papers, sir," he stated, facing the captain in the ship's dining saloon. "They have been canceled—they have been called in, as you may have read. But I hung on to them."

"Perhaps you stole 'em," suggested the master, after careful survey of the paper.

"If you have made up your mind that you will not believe me, sir, perhaps I can't change your opinion. But you just listen to my story of why I'm here, and how I happened to get here."

He told it in manly fashion, standing up while the captain sat, and drummed stubby fingers on the red damask tablecloth.

"I ain't prepared to say it isn't so," admitted Old Mull at last, "no matter how foolish it sounds. And I'm wondering if next I'll find the King of Peruvia or the Queen of Sheba aboard this schooner. New folks are piling in fast! I know Captain Wass pretty well, though I never laid eye on you to know you. Where's that wart on his face?"

"Starboard side of his nose, sir."

"What does he do, whittle off his chaw or bite the plug?"

"Neither. Chews fine cut."

"What's his favorite line of talk?"

"Reciting the pilot rules and jawing because the big fellows slam along without observing them."

"Examination is over, and you rank one hundred, and the board stands adjourned," said the master, and he got up and shook Mayo's hand. "I'm sorry you're in such a mess. What can I do for you?"

"Call in that passenger, and stay here as a witness while I ask him a few questions."

"Glad to accommodate one of my kind. He seems to be a breezy and busy talker."

But when Mr. Bradish appeared, answering the captain's summons, all his chattiness seemed to have left him. He declared that he knew nothing whatever regarding the case of the *Montana*. He grew white when Mayo railed at him, urged him, even threatened him while Captain Downs threw in a few surly words advising him to help a man who was down. But he would not disclose.

"The only trick there was in it was sending out a man who didn't know his business," he said at last, pricked by Mayo's angry insistence.

"I'd like to have you ashore, in a quiet spot, for about five minutes, you Wall Street snipe!" blazed the victim.

"And I reckon you'll have to wait till you get him there, if you want to settle the business that's between you two, Captain Mayo," interposed the master of the *Alden*. "I can't stand for any rough work from either of you aboard this schooner. Bradish, I want to drop a hint to you. Seafaring folks have a pretty brotherly feeling for each other. Mayo is in trouble, and I'm anxious to help him. I'll feel pretty friendly toward you if you can grab in here and give him an idea of what they put over on him."

"There's nothing I can tell this man that will help him, sir. I don't know anything about his matter."

"But you were talking to me in pretty lively style, Bradish."

"A fellow lets out a lot of guesswork, sometimes, when he is fooling and gossiping."

"Let's have some of your guesswork, then," pleaded Mayo. He spread his hands. "Look at me. You're young and I'm young. They have got my license away from me—I'm threatened with Atlanta. It's the rawest deal ever put over on an innocent man. For God's sake, give me a hint—what did you mean about that trick?"

"I have just told you: Fogg put on a green man."

"Confound you, I'm no green man!"

"The steamboat inspectors seemed to think so, after they had heard the evidence. Say, I don't propose to try this case over with you. I don't know anything about it. Furthermore, I've got enough troubles of my own."

Bradish displayed a city man's blasé indifference toward the plight of the unkempt chap who was pleading with him.

"Anything else, sir?" he asked, breaking upon the silence which settled on the little group.

"Guess not, if that's the way you feel about it!" snapped Captain Downs.

Bradish went back into the main saloon.

"I don't know just what the dickens to do about you, now that I know who you are," confessed the master, looking Mayo up and down.

"I don't think there's anything to do except let me go back to my work, sir."

"I'm in a devil of a position. You're a captain."

"I shipped on board here before the mast, Captain Downs, and knew exactly what I was doing. I'll take my medicine."

"I don't like to have you go for'ard there among those cattle, Mayo."

"Captain Downs, it was wrong for

me to make the break I did on your quarter-deck. I ought to have kept still —but the thing came to me so sudden that I went all to pieces. I'd like to step back into the crew and have you forget that I'm Stanley Mayo. I'll sneak ashore in Boston and lose myself. I was a fool to expose myself, and to think that man would do anything to help me."

The captain tipped up his cap and scratched the side of his head.

"Seems as if I remember you being at the wheel, Mayo, when that fellow was unloading some pretty important information onto me."

"I couldn't help hearing, sir."

"So you know he's eloping with John Marston's daughter?" The old skipper lowered his voice.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you ever hear of such a cussed, infernal performance? And I have talked with the girl, and she really doesn't seem to be that sort at all. She's flighty, you can see that. She has been left to run loose too much, like a lot of girls in society are running loose nowadays. They think of a thing that's different, and, biff! they go do it. She is wishing she hadn't done this. That shows some sense."

He studied the young man.

"Do you know anything about this right a captain has to perform marriage ceremonies?"

"Nothing special."

"It will probably be a good thing for that girl to be married and settle down. She seems to have picked out Bradish. Mayo, you're one of my kind, and I want to help you. I'll take a chance on my right to perform the ceremony. What say if we get Bradish back in here and swap a marriage for what he can tell us about the *Montana* business?"

"Captain Downs, a fellow who will put up a job of this kind on a girl, no matter if she has encouraged him, is a cheap pup," declared Mayo promptly and firmly. "I don't want to buy back my papers in any such fashion."

"Then you don't approve of my marrying them?"

"I haven't any right to tell you what you shall do, sir. I'm talking merely for myself."

Captain Downs pondered.

"If he's her father's right-hand man, he's probably just as good as most of the land pirates who have been courting her. If she goes home married, even if it is only marriage on the high seas, contract between willing persons with witnesses and the master of the vessel officiating, as I believe it's allowed, she'll have her good name protected, and that means a lot. I don't know as I have any right to stand out and block their way, seeing how far it has gone. What do you think, Mayo?"

"I don't believe I want to make any suggestions, sir."

At that moment a door opened and the girl came from the main saloon.

Her eyes were bright, her cheeks were flushed, and it was evident that her impulsive nature was flaming with determination.

"Captain Downs," stated Bradish, who entered and stood behind her, "Miss Marston has something to say to you, and hopes you'll listen."

"I couldn't wait, Captain Downs," she burst out impetuously. "When I make up my mind to do a thing I must act quickly."

She paid no attention to Mayo, who stepped back into the shadows, caught by surprise, flushed, so suddenly that he did not know whether to go or stay. Nor did Bradish seem to mind whether there were listeners or not. He gave Mayo a supercilious glance; he seemed to be proud to exhibit this girl as his property.

"Ralph tells me he has used up all his arguments on you, captain. But I'm sure you are gallant enough to do what

I ask. I have made up my mind. I want to have it all over with. Captain Downs, will you use your power on the high seas and marry us?"

She spoke breathlessly, almost hysterically.

"I thought, from things you dropped to me a while ago, that you were crawfishing," remarked the captain bluntly.

"I am sorry I have been so imprudent. I said so. I do so many things on impulse. But now that I am here, and have put myself in this position, I want to be married. Then I can face my father."

Captain Downs stared at her reflectively, tipping his cap more awry, scratching his head more violently.

"It's a big responsibility," he mumbled. "I've been trying to get some light on it myself. It's too much of a problem for a man to wrassle with all alone. Look here, Mayo," he blurted desperately, his eyes still on the girl, "say what you think. You're an unprejudiced party."

The young man did not answer.

Captain Downs turned his head and located Mayo where he stood in the corner.

"Speak up! Help me out. You're a man of good judgment."

"But this thing is none of my business—none whatever."

"That is so," declared Bradish.

"Why should this—this—person have anything to say about my errand with you, Captain Downs?" the girl demanded, looking at the sorry figure in the corner with petulant disgust.

"He draws more water, miss, than his present looks indicate," explained the master.

"It's an insult to me—asking that creature what he thinks about my marriage!" she protested.

"I resent it, captain," said Bradish, showing heat.

"Well, resent it, and be blowed! You're here asking favors of me. I want to do what's right for all concerned. I don't say but what you ought to be married. But what about the position I'm in if I do it? I'm betwixt and between in the matter. It's like settling a question by flipping a cent. And I'll tell you what I'm going to do!" He smacked his palm on the table. "I'm going to ask you, Mayo, sea captain to sea captain, to help me in a tight place, where I don't know what to do. You're strictly on the side lines. Would you marry these two if you were master of this schooner?"

"No, I would not," declared the young man.

"How does this come to be your affair, anyway?" shouted Bradish.

"It isn't my affair. I have said so. But Captain Downs asked me a question as a master mariner, and I answered it."

"Why wouldn't you marry us?"

Mayo gave the advancing lover a long, cold stare, and was silent for some moments. The schooner's creaking sheathing filled the gap in conversation with squallings.

"I don't care to explain."

"That settles it with me," announced the master, slapping the table once more. He poised a big hand. "I was ready to tip one way or the other, and it needed only a little push. I have tipped." The hand came down flat on the damask cloth. After a pause, he said: "There's an extra stateroom off this dining room, Bradish. You can have it."

"What can I tell my father?" sobbed the girl, her mood changing suddenly to helplessness.

"You can tell him that I temporarily adopted you as my daughter at three bells on this evening—and I'll go to him and back you up, if you ask me to!" said Captain Downs. "Now, you trot to your stateroom, sissy!"

After a moment she hurried away

Bradish closed the door behind her, and remained in the dining room.

"I've got something to say to you, you blacked-up fraud!" he began.

The first mate appeared on the steps of the forward companionway, entering through the coach-house door.

"She's breezing up fresh from the east'ard, sir," he reported.

Captain Downs arose briskly.

"Been thinking so, from the way this sheathing is talking up. I'll be on deck at once, Mr. Dodge."

Mayo started for the steps, but Bradish ran and intercepted him.

"Hold on, there!" roared Captain Downs.

But Bradish was plainly in no mood to obey authority. He understood only one reason for this stranger's attitude; the wretch was standing in the way of his dearest hope in order to satisfy a grudge. All the animal in him was raging.

He struck Mayo full in the face, choking with oaths when he did it.

The blow, coming with a lurch of the schooner, knocked the recipient flat on his back.

Then the master came between the two, with profane protests.

But he was an unwieldy man, and they dodged him, after Mayo was on his feet again.

Bradish was no shrimp of an adversary; he was taller than his antagonist, and handled his fists like a man who had been trained as an amateur.

They fought up and down the cabin, battering each other's faces.

The indignant master threatened them with an upraised chair, tried to strike down their hands with it, but they were in no mood to mind a mediator. They fought like maddened cats, banging against the cabin walls, whirling in crazy rigadoon to find an opening for their fists; Captain Downs was not nimble enough to catch them.

But the fight ended suddenly in a wrestling trick.

Mayo closed in, got Bradish's right hand in a grip, and doubled the arm behind his adversary's back. Then he tripped the city man and laid him backward over the table and against its edge with a violence that brought a yell of pain, and made Bradish limp and passive. Mayo held him there.

"My grudge, eh? My grudge!" the victor panted. "Because you wouldn't tell me how the sneaks ruined me? No! The girl isn't here now. I'll tell you, you skunk: It's because you stole her self-respect and her good name, and it makes you too dirty a dog to be her husband!"

He picked up Bradish and threw him on the floor. When he turned, he saw the girl's white, agonized, frightened face at the crack of the saloon door.

Mayo did not pause to listen to the ravings of Captain Downs.

Dizzy, bleeding, half blind, he rushed up the forward companionway and went into the black night on deck.

The mate was bawling for all hands to shorten sail, and Mayo took his place with the toilers, who were manning sheets and downhauls.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MONSTER THAT SLIPPED ITS LEASH.

Rain came with the wind, and the weather settled into a sullen, driving, summer easterly.

Midsummer regularly furnishes one of those storms to the Atlantic coast, a recrudescence of the wintry gales, a trial run of the elements, a sort of mid-equinoctial testing out so that Eurus may be sure that his bellows is in working condition.

Such a storm rarely gives warning ahead that it is to be severe.

It seems to be a meteorological prank in order to catch summer mariners napping.

At midnight the *Alden* was plunging into creaming seas, her five masts thrummed by the blast. With five thousand tons of coal weighting her, she wallowed like a water-soaked log.

Mayo, who was roused at four bells, morning, to go on deck for his watch, ventured as near the engine-room door as he dared, for the rain was soaking his meager garments, and the red glow from within was grateful. The ship's pump was clanking, a circumstance in no way alarming, because the huge schooners of the coal trade are racked and wrenched in rough water.

The second mate came to the engine room, lugging the sounding rod to the light in order to examine the smear on its freshly chalked length.

He tossed it out on deck, with a grunt of satisfaction.

"Nothing to hurt!" he said to the engineer. "However, I'd rather be inside the capes in this blow. The old skimmer ain't what she used to be. Johnson, do you know that this schooner is two feet longer when she is loaded than when she is light?"

"I knew she was hogged, but I didn't know it was as bad as that."

"I put the lead line on her before she went into the coal dock this trip, and I measured her again in the stream yesterday. With a cargo she just humps right up like a monkey bound for war. That's the way with these five-masters! They get such a racking they go wrong before the owners realize."

"They'll never build any more, and I don't suppose they want to spend much money on the old ones," suggested the engineer.

"Naturally not, when they ain't paying dividends as it is." He stepped to the weather rail and sniffed. "I reckon the old man will be dropping the killick before long," he said.

Mayo knew something of the methods of schooner masters, and was not surprised by the last remark.

In the gallant old days, when it was the custom to thrash out a blow, the latter plan of anchoring a big craft in the high seas off the Delaware coast, with Europe for a lee, would have been viewed with a certain amount of horror by a captain.

But the modern skipper figures that there's less wear and tear if he anchors and rides it out. To be sure, it's no sort of a place for a squeamish person, aboard a loaded schooner whose mudhook clutches bottom while the sea flings her about, but the masters and crews of coal luggers are not squeamish.

Mayo, glancing aft, saw two men coming forward slowly, stopping at regular intervals. The light of a lantern played upon their dripping oilskins. When they arrived at the break of the main deck, near the forward house, he recognized Captain Downs and the first mate. The second mate stepped out and replied to the captain's hail.

"Bring a maul and some more wedges!" commanded the master.

"*Drusilla* is getting her back up some more," commented the second mate, starting for the storeroom. "I don't blame her much. This is no place for an old lady, out here to-night."

He ordered Mayo to accompany him.

In a few moments they reported to the captain, the mate carrying the two-headed maul and the young man bearing an armful of wedges.

Captain Downs bestowed on Mayo about the same attention he would have allowed to a galley cockroach. He pointed to a gap in the rail.

"There—drive one in there," he told the mate. "Let that nigger hold the wedge."

The young man kneeled and performed the service and followed the party dutifully when they moved on to the next gap.

The pitching schooner groaned and grunted and squalled in all her fabric.

Every angle joint was working—yawing open and closing with dull grindings as the vessel rolled and plunged.

"By goofer, she's gritting her teeth in good shape!" commented the first mate.

"She ought to have been stiffened a year ago, when she first began to loosen and work!" declared Captain Downs. His anxiety stirred both his temper and his tongue. "I was willing to have my sixteenth into her assessed for repairs, but a stockholder don't have to go to sea! I wish I had an excursion party of owners aboard here now."

"When these old critters once get loose enough to play they rattle to pieces mighty fast," said the mate. "But this is nothing specially bad."

"Find out what we've got under us," snapped Captain Downs. The wedges had been driven. "Let this nigger carry the lead aft!"

It was a difficult task in the night, because the lead line had to be passed from the quarter-deck to the cathead outside the shrouds; the rails and deck were slippery. Plainly, Captain Downs was proposing to show Mayo "a thing or two."

He let go the lead at command, and heard the man on the quarter-deck, catching the line when it swung into a perpendicular position, report twenty-five fathoms.

Again, answering the mate's bawled orders, Mayo carried the lead forward and dropped it, after a period of waiting, during which the schooner had been eased off. He was soaked to the skin, and was wholly miserable both in body and mind. He had betrayed himself, he had made an enemy of the man who knew something which could help him; he felt a queer sense of shame and sorrow when he remembered the girl and the expression of her face. He would not admit to himself that he cared in the least what her opinion of him was. But her manifest scorn troubled him.

"I may as well make up my mind to it," he told himself. "It's a single-handed fight. I've got to buck it alone."

Five times he made his precarious trip with the lead, fumbling his way outside the rigging.

In twenty fathoms Captain Downs decided to anchor, after the mate, "arming" the lead by filling its cup with grease, found that they were over good holding ground.

When the *Alden* came into the wind and slowed down, slapping wet sails, the second mate hammered out the holding pin of the gigantic port anchor, and the hawse hole belched fathom after fathom of chain.

All hands were on deck, letting sails go on the run into the lazy jacks, and the big schooner swung broadside to the trough of the sea. She made a mighty pendulum, rolling rails under, sawing the black skies with her towering masts.

There are many things which can happen aboard a schooner in that position when men are either slow or stupid. A big negro who was paying out the mizzen-peak halyards allowed his line to foul. Into the triangle of sail the wind volleyed, and the thirty-foot mizzen boom, the roll of the ship helping, swung as far as its loosened sheets allowed. The "traveler," an iron hoop encircling a long bar of iron fastened at both ends to the deck, struck sparks as a trolley pulley produces fire from a sleety wire.

With splintering of wood and clanging of metal, the iron bar was wrenched from its deck fastenings and began to fly to and fro across the deck at the end of its tether, like a giant's slung-shot. It circled, it spun, it flung itself afar and returned in unexpected arcs.

Men fled from the area which this terror dominated.

The boom swung until it banged the mizzen shrouds to port, and then came swooping back across the deck, to slam against the starboard shrouds. The clanging, tethered missile it bore on its end seemed to be searching for a victim. When the boom met the starboard shrouds in its headlong rush, the schooner shivered.

"Free that halyard and douse the peak!" roared the first mate.

A sailor started, ducking low, but he ran back when the boom came across the deck with such a vicious swing that the iron bar fairly screamed through the air.

"Gawd-a-mighty! She'll bang the mast out of her!" clamored Captain Downs. "Get some men to those halyards, Mr. Dodge! Catch that boom!"

The mate ran and kicked at a sailor, shouting profane orders. He seized the fellow and thrust him toward the pins where the halyards were belayed. But at that instant the rushing boom came hurtling overhead with its slungshot, and the iron banged the rail almost exactly where the fouled line was secured. The mate and the sailor fell flat on their faces, and crawled back from the zone of danger.

"Get some rope and noose that boom! Lassoo it!" commanded the master, touching up his orders with some lurid sea oaths.

But the men who stepped forward did so timidly and slowly, and dodged back when the boom threatened. The flying bar was a terrible weapon. Now it swung in toward the mast—now swept in wider radius. Just where it would next sweep the deck between the masts depended on the vagary of wave and wind. It was perfectly apparent that anybody who got in its path would meet death as instantly as a fly under a housewife's spanker.

Life is sweet, even if a man is black and is toiling for a dollar-a-day wage.

And even if a man is a mate, at a higher wage and with more responsibility, he is inclined to think of himself before he figures on saving a mast and gear for a schooner's owners.

"What kind of a gor-rammed crew have I got aboard here?" shrieked the master.

"About the kind that all windjammers carry these days," said a voice at his elbow.

Captain Downs whirled, and found Stanley Mayo there.

"How do you dare to speak to me, you tin-kettle sailor?" demanded the master. In his passion, he went on: "You're aboard here under false pretenses. You can't even do your work. You have made this vessel liable by assaulting a passenger. You're no good! With you aboard here I'm just the same as one man short."

But he had no time to devote to this person.

He turned away and began to revile his mates and his sailors, his voice rising higher each time the rampaging boom crashed from side to side. One or two of the backstays had parted, and it was plain that before long the mast would go by the board.

"If that mast comes out it's apt to smash us clear to the water line," lamented the captain.

"If you can make your herd of sheep give me a hand at the right time, I'll show you that a tin-kettle sailor is as good as a windjammer swab," said Mayo, retaliating with some of the same sort of the rancor that Captain Downs had been expending. "I'd hate to find this kind of a bunch on any steamboat I've ever had experience with."

Then he ran away before the captain had time to retort. He made a slide across the danger zone on his back, like a runner in a ball game. This move brought him into a safe place be-

tween the mainmast and the mizzen. There was a coil of extra cable here, and he grabbed up the loose end and deftly made a running bowline knot. He set the noose firmly upon his shoulders, leaped up, and caught at the hoops on the mizzenmast.

"See to it that the line runs free from that coil, and stand by for orders," he shouted, and though his dyed skin was dark and he wore the garb of the common sailor, he spoke with the unmistakable tone of the master mariner. The second mate ran to the line and took charge.

"This is a savage bucking broncho," muttered Mayo, "but it's for the honor of the steamboat men! I'll proceed to show this gang!"

He poised himself for a few moments on the crotch of the boom, clinging to the cringles of the luff—the short ropes with which the sail is reefed.

As he stood there, gathering himself for his desperate undertaking, waiting for opportunity, taking the measure of the lashing and insensate monster whom he had resolved to subdue, he heard Captain Downs bawl an impatient command:

"Passengers go below!"

Mayo looked aft, and saw Alma Marston clinging to the spike rack of the spanker mast. The coach-house lantern shone upon her white face.

"Go below!" repeated the master.

She shook her head.

"This is no place for a woman."

"The vessel is going to sink!" she quavered.

"The schooner is all right. You go below!"

As to how bitter her fear was, Mayo could not determine. But even at his distance he could see stubborn resolution on her countenance.

"If I've got to die, I'll not die down there in a box," she cried. "I'm going to stay right here."

Captain Downs swore, and turned his back on her. Apparently he did not care to come to a real clinch with this feminine mutineer.

The great spar crashed out to the extent of its arc, and the sail volleyed with it, ballooning under the weight of the wind. The reef points were no longer within Mayo's reach. He ran along the boom, arms outspread to steady himself, and was halfway to its end before the telltale surge under him gave warning. Then he fell upon the huge stick, rolled under it, and shoved arms and legs under the foot of the sail. Barely had he clutched it in fierce embrace before it began its return journey. It was a dizzy sweep across the deck, a breath-taking plunge.

When the spar collided with the stays he felt as if arms and legs would be wrenched from his body.

He did not venture to move or to relax his hold. He clung with all his strength, and nerved himself for the return journey.

He had watched carefully, and knew something of the vagaries of the giant flail. When it was flung to port the wind helped to hold it there until the resistless surge of the schooner sent it flying wild once more. He knew that no mere flesh and blood could endure many of those collisions with the stays. He resolved to act on the next oscillation to port, in order that his strength might not be gone.

"See that the cable runs free!" he screamed, as he felt the stick lift for its swoop.

He swung himself upward over the spar the moment it struck, and the momentum helped him. He ran again, steadying himself like a tight-wire acrobat. He snatched the noose from his shoulders, slipped it over the end of the boom, and yelled an order, with all the strength of his lungs:

"Pull her taut!"

At that instant the boom started to swing again.

Standing on the end of the spar, he was outboard; the frothing sea was under him. He could not jump then; to leap when the boom was sweeping across the deck meant a skinful of broken bones; to wait till the boom brought up against the stays, so he realized, would invite certain disaster: he would either be crushed between boom and shrouds or snapped far out into the ocean as a bean is filliped by a thumb. On the extreme end of the spar the leverage would be so great that he could not hope to cling there with arms and legs.

A queer flick of thought brought to Mayo the phrase, "Between the devil and the deep sea." That flying boom was certainly the devil, and the foaming sea looked mighty deep.

Her weather roll was more sluggish, and Mayo had a moment to look about for some mode of escape.

He saw the sail of number four mast sprawling loose in its lazy jacks, unfurled and showing a tumbled expanse of canvas. When he was inside the rail, and while the boom was gathering momentum, he took his life in his hands and his grit between his teeth and leaped toward the sail. He made the jump just at the moment when the boom would give him the most help.

He heard Captain Downs' astonished oath when he dove over that worthy mariner's head, a human comet in a twenty-foot parabola.

He landed in the sail on his hands and knees, yelling even as he alighted: "Catch her, boys!"

They did it when the spar banged against the stays. They surged on the rope, tightened the noose, and before the vessel rolled again had made half a dozen turns of the free end of the cable around the nearest cleats.

Mayo scrambled down from the sail and helped them complete the work of securing the spar.

He passed near Captain Downs when the job had been finished.

"Well," growled the master of the *Alden,* "what do you expect me to say to that?"

"I simply ask you to keep from saying something."

"What?"

"That a steamboat man can't earn his pay aboard a windjammer, sir. I don't like to feel that I am under obligations in any way."

The master grunted.

"And if the little thing I have done helps to square that break I made by licking your passenger, I'll be glad of it," added Mayo.

"You needn't rub it in," said Captain Downs, carefully noting that there was nobody within hearing distance. "When a man has been in a nightmare for twenty-four hours like I've been you've got to make some allowances, Captain Mayo. This is a terrible mixed-up mess."

He squinted at the mizzen rigging where the lanterns revealed the damage.

"And by the way those backstays are ripped out, and seeing how that mast is wabbling, this schooner is liable to be about as badly mixed up as the people are on board of her."

Mayo turned away and went back to his work. They were rigging extra stays for the mizzenmast.

And he noted that the girl near the coach-house door was staring at him with a great deal of interest.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN RATS DESERT.

An hour later the mate ordered the oil bags to be tied to the catheads. The bags were huge gunny sacks stuffed with cotton waste which was saturated with oil.

In spite of the fact that her spanker, double-reefed, was set in order to hold her up to the wind, weather-vane

fashion, the schooner seemed determined to keep her broadside to the tumbling seas. The oil slick helped only a little; every few moments a wave with spoondrift flying from it would smash across the deck, volleying tons of water between rails, with a sound like thunder. At these times the swirling torrent in the waist would reach to a man's knees.

Mayo did not take his watch below. The excitement of his recent experience had driven away all desire for sleep, and the sheathing in the fo'c'sle was squawking with such infernal din that only a deaf man could have remained there in comfort.

However, he was not uneasy in regard to the safety of the big schooner. In a winter gale, with ice caking on her, he would have viewed their situation in different light. But he had frequently seen the seas breaking over the wallowing coal luggers when he had passed them at anchor on the coast.

He made a trip of his own along the main deck, avoiding the occasional deluge which swept her amidship by scrambling upon the spars. The battened hatches were apparently withstanding the onslaughts of the waves. He could feel less weight in the wind. It was apparent that the crisis of the summer blow had passed. The waves were not so savage; their crests were not breaking.

But just then the second mate rushed past, and Mayo overheard the report he gave the captain, who was pacing the lee alley:

"The mizzenmast is getting more play, sir. I'm afraid it's raising the devil with the step and the ke'lson."

"Rig extra stays and try her again for water," ordered the master.

Mayo, returning to the mizzen, found the entire crew grouped there. The mast was writhing and groaning in its deck collar, twisting its coat—the canvas covering at its foot where it entered the deck.

The dusky faces were exhibiting much concern.

They had flocked where the ship was dealing herself a wound; the sailor sixth sense of impending trouble had drawn them there.

"Four of you hustle aloft and stand ready to make fast those stays!" commanded the first mate. "Rest of you make ready tackle!" shouted the second mate, following close on Mayo's heels.

The negroes did not stir. They mumbled among themselves.

"Step lively!" insisted the mate.

"'Scuse us, but dat mast done goin' to tumble down," ventured a man.

"Aloft with you, I say!"

Just then the schooner slatted on a great roller, and the starboard stays snapped, one after the other, like mammoth fiddle strings. The mast reeled, and there was an ominous sound below the deck.

"She done put a hole into herself!" squealed a sailor.

In the gloom their eyes were gleaming with the fires one beholds in the eyes of frightened cats.

"Dere she comes!" shouted one of them. He pointed trembling finger.

Over the coamings of the fore hatch black water was bubbling.

Yelping like animals, the sailors stampeded aft in a bunch, bowling over Mayo and the mates in their rush.

"Stop 'em, captain!" bellowed the first mate, guessing their intent. He rose and ran after them.

But fright gave them wings for their heels. They scampered over the roof of the after house, and were on the quarter-deck before the skipper was out of the alley. They leaped into the yawl which was swung at the stern davits.

"You renegades!" roared the master. "Come out of that boat!" With the two mates at his heels, he rushed at them. They grabbed three struggling

men by the legs and dragged them back. But the negroes wriggled loose, driven to frantic efforts by their panic. They threw themselves into the boat again.

"Be men!" clamored Mayo, joining the forces of discipline. "There's a woman aboard here!"

But the plea which might have affected an Anglo-Saxon did not prevail.

Their knives were out—not for attack on their superiors, but to slash away the davit tackle.

"Come on, boys! Throw 'em out!" shouted the master, leading the way into the yawl over the rail. His two mates and Mayo followed, and the engineer, freshly arrived from forward, leaped after them.

But as fast as they tossed a man upon the quarter-deck he was up and in the boat again, fighting for a place.

"Throw 'em overboard!" roared the master, venting a terrible oath.

He knocked one of the maddened wretches into the sea. The next moment the captain was on his back, and the sailors were trampling on him.

Most of the surges came riding rail high; sometimes an especially violent wave washed the deck aft.

Following it, a chasm regularly opened under the vessel's counter, a swirling pit in the ocean twenty feet deep.

There was good fortune as well as misfortune in the affair of the yawl. It avoided the period of the chasm.

In spite of the efforts of the captain and his helpers, the sailors succeeded in slashing away the davit tackle. A swelling roller came up to meet the boat as the last strand gave way and swept it, with its freight, out into the night. But as it went, Mayo clutched a davit pulley and swung in mid-air.

The dizzy depths of the sea opened under him as he dangled there and gazed down.

An instant later all his attention was focused on Alma Marston, who stood in the companionway, clutching its sides and shrieking out her fears. The lantern showed her to him plainly. Its radiance lighted him, also.

He called to her several times, angrily at last.

"Where is that man, Bradish?" he demanded fiercely.

It seemed as if his arms would be pulled out. He could not reach the davit iron from where he hung; the schooner's rail was too far away, though he kicked his feet in that direction.

"Don't be a fool! Stop that screaming," he told her. "Call Bradish!"

"He is sick—he—he—is frightened," she faltered.

"Come out here! Pull on that rope. Swing me in. I can't hold on here much longer. Do you want to see me drown?"

She came along the rail, clinging to it.

"No, not that rope! The other one. Pull hard!"

She obeyed, fighting back her fear. The davit swung inward slowly, and he managed to slide his legs up over the rail and gain the deck.

"Thank you!" he gasped. "You're quite a sailor!"

"We are going to die, aren't we?" she asked, her lips quivering.

"I don't know," he returned bluntly.

"Why don't they come back after us?"

"Good Jericho! Don't be a fool," he cried, his anxieties mastering his politeness. "They've got to go where that sea takes 'em."

"I won't be a fool—not any more," she told him.

There was so distinctly a new note in her voice that he stared at her.

"I am no coward," she said. She seemed to have mastered herself suddenly and singularly. Mayo's eyes expressed frank astonishment; he was

reflecting that he did not understand women very well.

"I don't blame you for thinking that I am a fool, but I am not a coward," she repeated.

"I'm sorry," stammered the young man. "I forgot myself."

"There is danger, isn't there?"

"I'm afraid the mast has pounded a bad hole in her. I must run forward. I must see if something can't be done."

"I am going with you."

She followed him when he started away.

"You must stay aft. You can't get forward along that deck. Look at the waves breaking over her!"

"I am going with you," she insisted. "Perhaps there is something that can be done. Perhaps I can help."

He was not used to the ways of women. The girl was stubborn, and he knew there was no time for argument.

Three times on their way forward he was obliged to hold her in the hook of his arm while he fought with the torrent that a wave launched upon the deck.

There was no doubt regarding the desperate plight of the schooner.

She was noticeably down by the head, and black water was swashing forward of the break of the main deck.

The door of the galley was open, and the one-eyed cook was revealed sitting within beneath a swinging lantern. He held a cat under his arm.

"Bear a hand here, cook!" called Mayo.

But the man did not get off his stool.

"Bear a hand, I say! We've got to rig tackle and get this longboat over."

The schooner's spare boat was in chocks between the foremast and the main. Mayo noted that it was heaped full of spare cable and held the usual odds and ends of a clutterbox.

He climbed in hastily and gave a hand to the girl to assist her over the rail.

"It will keep you out of the swash," he advised her. "Sit there in the stern while I toss out this truck."

But she did not sit down. She began to throw out such articles as her strength could manage.

Again Mayo hailed the cook, cursing him heartily.

"Oh, it ain't any use," declared the man, with resignation. "We're goners."

"We aren't gone till we go, you infernal turtle! Come here and pitch in."

"I hain't got no heart left for anything. I never would have believed it. The Old Man going off and saving a lot of nigger sailors instead of me—after all the vittles I've fixed up for him. If that's the kind of gratitude there is in the world, I'm glad I'm going out of it. Me and the cat will go together. The cat's a friend, anyway."

Mayo lost his temper then in earnest. All his nature was on edge in that crisis, and this supine surrender of an able-bodied man whose two hands were needed so desperately was peculiarly exasperating.

He leaped out of the boat, ran into the galley, and gave the cook an invigorating beating up with the flat of his hands. The cook clutched his cat more firmly, braced himself on the stool, and took his punishment.

"Kill me if you want to," he invited. "I've got to die, and it don't make a mite of difference how. Murder me if you're so inclined."

"Man—man—man, what's the matter with you?" gasped Mayo. "We've got a chance. Here's a girl to save!"

"She ain't got no business being here. Was sneaked aboard. It's no use to pound me. I won't lift a finger. My mind is made up. I've been deserted by the Old Man."

"You old lunatic, Captain Downs got carried away by those cowards. Wake up! Help me—for the love of the Lord, help me!"

"Rushing around will only take my

mind off'm thoughts of the hereafter—and I need to do some right thinking before my end. It ain't any use to threaten and jaw; nothing makes any difference to me now."

Mayo saw the uselessness of further appeal, and the fellow dangled as limply as a stuffed dummy when the young man shook him. Therefore, Mayo gave over his efforts and hurried back to the longboat. The spectacle of the girl struggling with the stuff she was jettisoning put new determination into him. Her amazing fortitude at the time when he had looked for hysterics and collapse gave him new light on the enigma of femininity.

"Did you tell me that Bradish is ill?" he asked hurriedly.

"He is in the cabin. He would not talk to me. I could not induce him to come on deck."

"I must have help with the tackle," he told her, and started aft on the run.

He found Bradish sprawled in a morris chair which was lashed to a radiator. He expected hot words and more insults, but Bradish turned to him a face that was gray with evident terror. His jaw sagged; his eyes appealed.

"This is awful," he mourned. "What has happened on deck? I heard the fighting. Where is Miss Marston?"

"She is forward. There has been an accident—a bad one. We have lost the captain and crew. Come on. I need help."

"I can't help. I'm all in!" groaned Bradish.

"I say you must. It's the only way to save our lives."

Bradish rolled his head on the back of the chair, refusing. His manner, his sudden change from the fighting mood, astonished Mayo. The thought came to him that this man had been pricked to conflict by bitter grudge instead of by his courage.

"Look here, Bradish, aren't you going to help me save that girl?"

"I'm not a sailor. There's nothing I can do."

"But you've got two hands, man. I want to get a boat overboard. Hurry!"

"No, no! I wouldn't get into a small boat with these waves so high. It wouldn't be safe."

"This schooner is sinking," shouted Mayo. He set heavy clutch upon Bradish's shoulders. "There's no time to argue this thing. You come along!"

He hauled Bradish to his feet and propelled him to the companionway, and the man went along without resistance. It was evident that real danger and fear of death had paralyzed him.

"There's nothing I can do!" he kept bleating.

But Mayo hurried him forward.

"Ralph!" cried the girl, fairly lashing him with the tone in which she delivered the word. "What is the matter with you?"

"There's nothing I can do—it isn't safe out here."

"You must do what this man tells you to do. He knows."

But Bradish clung to the gunwale of the longboat and stared out at the yeasty waves, blinking his eyes.

"If I only had a couple of men instead of these two infernal tapeworms," raged Mayo, "I could reeve tackle and get this boat over. Wake up! Wake up!" he clamored, beating his fist on Bradish's back.

"Ralph! Be a man!" There were anger, protest, shocked wonder in her tones.

Suddenly Mayo saw an ominous sight and heard a boding sound. The fore hatch burst open with a mighty report, forced up by the air compressed by the inflowing water. He wasted no more breath in argument and appeals. He realized that even an able crew would not have time to launch the boat. The schooner was near her doom.

In all haste he pulled his clasp knife and cut the lashings which held the

boat in its chocks. That the craft would be driven free from the entangling wreckage and go afloat when the schooner went under, he could hardly hope. But there was only this desperate chance to rely upon in the emergency.

In his agony of despair and his fury of resentment, he was tempted to climb into the boat and leave the two cowards to their fate.

But he stooped, caught Bradish by the legs, and boosted him over the gunwale into the yawl. A sailor's impulse is to save life even at the risk of his own. Mayo ran to the galley and kicked the cook off the stool and then drove him headlong to the longboat. The man went along, hugging his cat.

"What will happen to us?" asked the girl when Mayo climbed in.

"I don't know," he panted. "I reckon the devil is pitching coppers for us just now—and the penny is just hopping off his thumb nail!"

His tone was reckless. The excitement of the past few hours was having its effect on him at last. He was no longer normal. Something that was almost delirium affected him.

"Aren't you frightened?" she asked.

"Yes," he admitted. "But I'm going to keep hustling just the same."

Bradish and the cook were squatting amidships in the yawl.

"You lie down under those thwarts, the two of you, and hang on," cried Mayo. Then he quickly passed a rope about the girl's waist and made the ends of the line fast to the cleats.

"I don't know what will happen when the old tub dives," he told her. "Those five thousand tons of coal will take her with a rush when she starts. All I can say is, hold tight and pray hard!"

"Thank you," she said quietly.

"By gad, she's got grit!" muttered the young man, scrambling forward over the prostrate forms of the other passengers.

There was a huge coil of rope in the bow, spare cable stored there.

Mayo made fast the free end, working as rapidly as he was able, bundled about half the coil into a compact mass —a knob at the end of some ten fathoms of line. And to this knob he lashed oars and the mast he found stowed in the boat. He knew that if they did get free from the schooner, only an efficient sea anchor or drag would keep the yawl right side up.

When this task was finished he crouched low in the bow and looked at the girl.

"We're about ready to start on our journey," he called to her. "If I don't see you again, good-by!"

"What is your name?" she inquired.

"Stanley Mayo."

"I shall not say good-by to you, Mr. Mayo—not yet!"

CHAPTER XVI.

DOWN A GALLOPING SEA.

With anxiety that was almost despairing, Mayo looked up at the shrouds, stays, and halyards, which were set like nets to right and left and overhead.

A big roller tumbled inboard and filled the space forward of the break of the main deck. The swirling water touched the sides of the longboat and then receded when the stricken schooner struggled up from the welter. A scuttle butt was torn from its lashings and went by the board, and other flotsam followed it.

Mayo found that spectacle encouraging. But the longboat sat high in its chocks; when it did float it might be too late.

Another wave roared past, and the longboat quivered.

Then Mayo took a chance without reckoning on consequences. He made a double turn of the cable around his forearm and leaped out of the boat and

stood on deck, his shoulder against the stem. The next wave washed him to his waist, tore at him, beat him against the longboat's shoe, but he clung fast and lifted and pushed with all his strength.

That push did it!

The boat needed just that impetus to free her from the chocks.

She lifted and rushed stern foremost to lee, and the young man dragged after her.

When the boat dipped and halted in a hollow of the sea he clutched the bow and clambered in. Tugging mightily, he managed to dump the sea anchor over.

The next wave caught her on the quarter and slopped a barrel of water into her. But she kept right side up, and in a few moments the cable straightened, and she rode head into the tumult of the ocean; the sea anchor was dragging and performing its service.

Mayo was obliged to kick the two men with considerable heartiness before he could stir them to bailing with the buckets. The bedraggled cat fled to the shelter of the girl's arms. Mayo struggled aft, in order to take his weight from the bow of the boat, and when he sat down beside the girl she was "mothering" the animal.

"It's coming in faster than I can throw it out!" wailed Bradish.

"Bail faster, then! Bail or drown!"

"She's leaking," announced the cook. "She has been on deck so long she has got all dried out."

"Bail or drown!" repeated Mayo. To the girl he said: "This seems to be the only way of getting work out of cowards. They'll have to do it. I'm about done for."

The waves were lifting and dropping them in dizzying fashion. There was suddenly a more violent tossing of the water.

"That's the old packet! She went under then!" Mayo explained. "Thank the Lord we are out of her clutches! I was afraid we were stuck there."

"Is there any hope for us now?" she inquired.

"I don't know. If the boat stays afloat, and the wind doesn't haul and knock this sea crossways, if somebody sees us in the morning, if we don't get rolled onto the coast in the breakers and——"

He did not finish.

"It seems that a lot of things can happen at sea," she suggested.

"I think that fact has been proved to me pretty conclusively in the past few weeks."

"You mean in the past few hours, don't you?"

"Miss Marston, what has happened on that schooner is a part of the business, and a sailor must take it as it comes along. I wish nothing worse had happened to me than what's happening now."

She stared at him in frank amazement, and he was sitting so close that her expression was visible in the darkness.

"But no matter about it," he said curtly.

The two men, kneeling amidships, clutching a thwart and bailing with their free hands, toiled away; even Bradish had wakened to the fact that he was working for his own salvation.

In the obscurity, the waves which rose ahead seemed like mountains topped with snow. Hollows and hills of water swept past on their right and left. But the crests of the waves were not breaking, and this fact meant respite from immediate danger.

"I'm sorry it was all left to you to do," ventured the girl, breaking a long silence. "I thought Ralph had more man in him," she added bitterly. "I feel that he ought to apologize to you for—for several things."

He did not reply. He was afraid that

she intended to draw him into argument or explanation regarding his attitude in the matter of that proposed ceremony of marriage. Just what he would be able to say to her on that topic was not clear to him.

"It seems as if years had gone by instead of hours. It seems as if I had lived half a life since I left home. It seems as if I had changed my nature and had grown up to see things in a different light. It is all very strange to me." He did not know whether she were talking to herself or to him. He did not offer comment.

"Are you just a—a sailor?" she inquired, after another long period of silence. The sound of rushing waters filled that silence and made their conversation audible only to themselves when they talked.

"Yes, ma'am."

"But I heard Captain Downs say to you, 'As sea captain to sea captain!'"

"I suppose I may as well tell you that I was in command of the *Montana* when she got into trouble lately." He was sullen—on the defensive.

"Now I can understand some more things I overheard when you were talking on deck. I have read about the accident in the newspapers. I was interested because I knew that my father had been talking of buying the line. It's too bad you made the mistake you did. Probably my father would have kept you in his employ. But he never forgives those who make mistakes." She added this sadly, her mind full of her own troubles.

"I made no mistake, Miss Marston," he said, with decisive vigor. "They used me—I don't know yet just how it was done. Then when they had used me they kicked me out. But they are not done with me."

"I don't understand how you happened to be on that schooner—as—as you were," she said, hesitating.

"I didn't rig myself out this way to play any practical jokes, Miss Marston," he returned bitterly.

"I would like to know how it all happened—your side of it."

"I have talked too much already."

There was no more conversation for a long time. He wondered how she had mustered courage to talk at all. They were in a predicament to try the courage of even a seasoned seaman. In the night, tossed by that wild sea, drifting they knew not where, she had apparently disregarded danger and had showed solicitude in his behalf. He asked himself if she had not merely exhibited feminine ignorance of what their situation meant. He had often seen cases where apparent bravado was based on such ignorance.

"I must say that you told me the truth a while ago—you are not a coward," he said at last. She was comforting the wretched cat.

"But I am miserably frightened," she admitted. "I don't dare to think about the thing. I don't dare to look at the waves. I talked to you so as to take my mind off my troubles. I didn't mean to be prying."

"I'll tell you what has been done to me," he blurted. "Hearing somebody's troubles may take your mind off your own."

While the two men amidships bailed doggedly and weariedly, he told his story as briefly as he could. The gray dawn showed her face to him after a time, and he was peculiarly comforted by the sympathy he saw there. He did not communicate to her any suspicions he may have entertained. With sailor directness, he related how he had worked his way up, how he had hoped, and how all had been snatched away from him.

After a time, Bradish and the cook were enabled to rest from the work of bailing. The planks of the boat swelled, and the leak was stopped.

"You'd better crawl aft here and sit

beside Miss Marston," advised Mayo. "Be careful how you move."

He passed Bradish and took the latter's place with the cook.

"I don't see no sense in prolonging all this agony," averred that despondent person. "We ain't ever going to get out of this alive. We're drifting in on the coast, and you know what that means."

"You may jump overboard any time you see fit," said the skipper of the craft. "I don't need you any longer for bailing!"

"If that's the way you feel about it, you won't get rid of me so easy," declared the cook, malevolence in his single eye.

Mayo noticed, with some surprise, that after the two had exchanged a few words there was silence between Bradish and the girl. The New Yorker was pale and trembling, and his jaw still sagged, and he threw glances to right and left as the surges galloped under them. He was plainly and wholly occupied with his fears.

When day came at last, without rain, but with heavy skies, in which masses of vapor dragged, Mayo began eager search of the sea. He had no way of determining their whereabouts, but he hoped they were far enough offshore to be in the track of traffic. But he could see no sail, no encouraging trail of smoke.

But after a time he did behold something which was not encouraging. He stood up and balanced himself and gazed westward, in the direction in which they were drifting; every now and then a lifting wave enabled him to command a wide stretch of the sea.

He saw a white ribbon of foam that stretched its way north and south into the obscurity of the mists.

He did not report this finding at once. He looked at his companions and pondered.

"I think you have something to say to me," suggested the girl.

"I suppose I ought to say it. I've been wondering just how it ought to be said. It's not pleasant news."

"I am prepared to hear anything, Captain Mayo. Nothing matters a great deal just now."

"We are being driven onto the coast. I don't know whether it's the Delaware or the New Jersey coast. It doesn't make much difference. The breakers are just as bad in one place as in the other."

"Why don't you anchor this boat? Are you going to let it go ashore and be wrecked?" asked Bradish, with anger that was childish.

"The anchor seems to have been overlooked when we started on this little excursion. As I remember it, there was some hurry and bustle," returned Mayo dryly.

"Why didn't you remember it? You got us into this scrape. You slammed and bossed everybody around. You didn't give anybody else a chance to think. You call yourself a sailor! You're a devil of a sailor to come off without an anchor."

"I suppose so," admitted Mayo.

"And there wasn't any sense in coming off in this little boat. We ought to have stayed on the schooner."

"Ralph!" protested the girl. "Have you completely lost your mind? Don't you know that the schooner sank almost the minute we left it?"

"Mr. Bradish's mind was very much occupied at the time," said Captain Mayo.

"I don't believe the schooner sank. What does a girl know about such things? That fellow got scared, that's the trouble. There isn't any sense in leaving a big boat in a storm. We would have been taken off before this. We would have been all right. This is what comes of letting a fool boss

you around when he is scared," he raved.

"You are the fool," she cried, with passion. "Captain Mayo saved us."

"Saved us from what? Here we are going into the breakers—and he says so—and there's no anchor on here. He took everything out of my hands. Now why doesn't he do something?"

"Don't pay any attention to him," she pleaded.

"We are going to be drowned! You can't deny it, can you? We're going to die!" He pulled a trembling hand from between his knees, where he had held both hands pinched in order to steady them. He shook his fist at Mayo. "Own up, now. We're going to die, aren't we?"

"I think it's right to tell the truth at this stage," said Mayo, in steady tones. "We're not children. Yonder is a beach with sand reefs and breakers, and when we strike the sand this boat will go over and over, and we shall be tossed out. The waves will throw us up and haul us back like a cat playing with mice. And we stand about the same chance as mice."

"And that's the best you can do for us—and you call yourself a sailor!" whined Bradish.

"I'm only a poor chap who has done his best as it came to his hand to do," said the young man, seeking the girl's eyes with his. She gazed at him for a moment and then put both hands to her face and began to sob.

"It's a hard thing to face, but we'd better understand the truth and be as brave as we can," said Mayo gently.

"For myself, I ain't a mite surprised," averred the cook. "I had my hunch! I was resigned. But my plans was interfered with. I wanted to go down in good, deep, green, clean water like a sailor ought to. And now I'm going to get mauled into the sand and have a painful death."

"Shut up!" barked Mayo.

The girl was trembling, and he feared collapse.

Bradish began to blubber.

"I'm not prepared to die," he protested.

Mayo studied his passenger for some time, wrinkling his brows.

"Bradish, listen to me a moment!"

The New Yorker gave him as much attention as terror and grief permitted.

"There isn't much we can do just now to fix up our general earthly affairs. But we may as well clean the slate between us two. That will help our consciences a little. I haven't any quarrel with you, any more. We won't be mushy about it. But let's cross it off."

"It's all over," mourned Bradish. "So what's the use of bearing grudges?"

"I suppose it's true that the court has indicted me for manslaughter. Bradish, tell me, man to man, whether I've got to go into those breakers with that on my conscience!"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do! You know whether those men of the schooner *Warren* were drowned by any criminal mistake of mine or not!"

Bradish did not speak.

"You wouldn't have said as much to Captain Downs if you hadn't known something," insisted the victim of the plot.

"It was only what Burkett let drop when he came after some money. I suppose he thought it was safe to talk to me. But what's the good of my giving you guesswork? I don't know anything definite. I don't understand sailor matters."

"Bradish, what Burkett said—was it something about the compass—about putting a job over on me by monkeying with the compass?"

"It was something like that." His tone exhibited indifference; it was evident that he was more occupied with his terror than with his confession.

"Didn't Burkett say something about a magnet?"

"He got off some kind of a joke about Fogg in the pilot house and fog outside—but that the Fogg inside did the business. And he said something about Fogg's iron wishbone."

"So that was the way it was done—and done by the general manager of the line!" cried Mayo. "The general manager, himself! It's no wonder I have smashed that suspicion between the eyes every time it bobbed up! I suspected—but I didn't dare to suspect! Is that some of your high finance, Bradish?"

"No, it isn't," declared the New Yorker, with heat. "It's an understrapper like Fogg going ahead and producing results, so he calls it. The big men never bother with the details."

"The details! Taking away from me all I have worked for—my reputation as a master, my papers, my standing—my liberty. By the gods, I'm going to live! I'm going through those breakers! I'll face that gang like a man who has fought his way back from hell," raged the victim.

"This—this was none of my father's business! It could not have been," expostulated Miss Marston.

"Your father never knows anything about the details of Fogg's operations," declared Bradish.

"He ought to know," insisted the maddened scapegoat. "He gives off his orders, doesn't he? He sits in the middle of the web. What if he did know how Fogg was operating?"

"Probably wouldn't stand for it! But he doesn't know. And the Angel Gabriel himself wouldn't get a chance to tell him!" declared the clerk.

"A put-up job, then, is it—and all called high finance!" jeered Mayo.

"High finance isn't to blame for tricks the field workers put out so that they can earn their money quick and easy. What's the good of your pestering me with questions at this awful time? I'm going to die! I'm going to die!" he wailed.

Miss Marston slid from the seat to her knees, in order that she might be able to reach her hand to Mayo.

"Will you let this handclasp tell you all I feel about it all—all your trouble, all your brave work in this terrible time? I am so frightened, Captain Mayo! But I'm going to keep my eyes on you—and I'll be ashamed to show you how frightened I am."

He returned the fervent clasp of her fingers with gentle pressure and reassuring smile.

"Honestly, I feel too ugly to die just now. Let's keep on hoping."

But when he stood up and beheld the white mountains of water between their little boat and the shore and realized what would happen when they were in that savage tumult, with the undertow dragging and the surges lashing, he felt no hope within himself.

From the appearance of the coast, he could not determine their probable location. The land was barren and sandy. There seemed to be no inlet. As far as he could see the line of frothing white was unbroken. The sea foamed across broad shallows, where no boat could possibly remain upright and no human being could hope to live.

Nevertheless, he remained standing and peered under his hand, resolved to be alert till the last, determined to grasp any opportunity.

All at once he beheld certain black lines in perpendicular silhouette against the foam. At first he was not certain just what they could be, and he observed them narrowly as the boat tossed on its way.

At last their identity was revealed. They were weir stakes. The weir itself was evidently dismantled. Such stakes as remained were set some distance from each other, like fence posts located irregularly.

He made hasty observation of bearings as the boat drifted, and was certain that the sea would carry them down past the stakes. How near they would pass depended on the vagary of the waves and the tide. He realized that three men, even if they were able seamen, could do little in the way of rowing or guiding the longboat in the welter of that sea, now surging madly over the shoals. He knew that there was not much water under the keel, for the ocean was turbid with swirling sand, and the waves were more mountainous. Every now and then the crest of a roller flaunted a banner of bursting spray, showing breakers near at hand.

Mayo hurried to the bow of the boat and pulled free a long stretch of cable. He made a bowline slipknot, opened a noose as large as he could handle, coiled the rest of the cable carefully, and poised himself on a thwart.

"What now?" asked the cook.

"No matter," returned Mayo.

His project was such a gamble that he did not care to canvass it in advance.

The nearer they drove to the stakes, the more unattainable those objects seemed. They projected high above the water.

The cook perceived them and got up on his knees and squinted.

"Huh!" he sniffed. "You'll never make it. It can't be done!"

In his fierce anxiety Mayo heaved his noose too soon, and it fell short.

He dragged in the cable with all his quickness and strength and threw the noose again. The rope hit the stake three-quarters of the way up and fell into the sea.

"It needs a cowboy for that work," muttered the cook.

Mayo recovered his noose and poised himself again.

In the shallows where they were the boat which bore him became a veritable bucking broncho. It was flung high—it swooped down into the hollows. He made a desperate try for the next stake in line. The noose caught, and he snubbed quickly. The top of the stake came away, with a dull crack of rotten wood, when the next wave lifted the boat.

Mayo pulled in his rope hand over hand with frantic haste. He was obliged to free the broken stake from the noose and pull his extemporized lasso into position again. He made a wider noose. His failures had taught a point or two. He waited till the boat was on the top of a wave. He curbed his desperate impatience, set his teeth, and whirled the noose about his head in a widening circle. Then he cast just as the boat began to drop. The rope encircled the stake, dropped to the water, and he paid out all his free cable so that a good length of the heavy rope might lie in the water and form a makeshift bridle. When he snubbed carefully, the noose drew close around the stake, and the latter held. The waves which rode under them were terrific, and Mayo's heart came into his mouth every time a tug and shock indicated that the rope had come taut.

However, after five minutes of anxious waiting, kneeling in the bow, his eyes on the cable, he found his courage rising and his hopes glowing.

"Does it mean——" gasped the girl when he turned and looked at her.

"I don't know just what it will mean in the end, Miss Marston," he said, with emotion. "But it's a reprieve while that rope holds."

Bradish sat clutching the gunwale with both hands, staring over his shoulder at the waters frothing and roaring on the shore. The girl glanced at him occasionally with a certain wonderment in her expression. It seemed to Mayo that she was trying to assure herself that Bradish was some person whom she knew. But she did not appear to have much success in making him seem real. She spoke to him once

or twice in an undertone, but he did not answer. Then she turned her back on him.

Suddenly Mayo leaped up and shouted.

A man was running along the sandy crest of a low hill near the beach. He disappeared in a little structure that was no larger than a sentry box.

"There's a coast-guard patrol—from the life-saving station—there must be one somewhere along here!"

The man rushed out and flourished his arms.

"He has telephoned," explained Mayo. "Those are the boys! There's hope for us!"

There was more than hope—there was rescue after some hours of dreary and anxious waiting.

The lifeboat came frothing down the sea from the distant inlet, and they were lifted on board by strong arms.

And then Alma Marston gave Stanley Mayo the strangest look he had ever received from a woman's eyes. But her lips grew white and her eyes closed, and she lapsed into unconsciousness while he folded a blanket about her.

"You must have had quite a job of it, managing a woman through this scrape," suggested the captain of the crew.

"It's just the other way," declared Mayo. "I'm giving her credit for saving the whole of us."

"How's that?"

"I might find it a little hard to make you understand, captain. Let it stand as I have said it."

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW A GIRL REGARDED A DEBT OF HONOR.

Mayo was promptly informed that Captain Downs and the crew of the *Alden* were safe.

"He caught our flare, got his motor to working, and made the inlet by a lucky stab," explained the captain. "But he didn't reckon he'd ever see you folks again. How did it happen he didn't tell me there was a woman aboard?"

"You'll have to ask him."

"Who is she?"

"You'll have to ask him that, too. I'm only a sailor."

The captain looked him over with considerable suspicion. His shirt was torn and his white skin was revealed. The drenching by rain and spray had played havoc with his disguise; most of the coloring had been washed away.

"Have you got anything special to say about yourself?"

"No, sir."

The captain turned his back on his men and leaned close to Mayo.

"They have had your picture in the paper this week," he said. "You're the captain they indicted in that *Montana* case. They're after you. I've got to report on this thing, you understand!"

"Very well, captain."

"But I reckon we'll talk it all over after we get to the station," said the master kindly. "There may be something in it that I don't understand."

"There's considerable in it that I don't understand, myself, just now, but I'm going to find out," declared Captain Mayo.

They placed Alma Marston in the care of the station captain's wife as soon as they were safely on shore in the inlet. Fortunate chance had sent the woman to the station that day on a visit to her husband.

Captain Downs, fed and warmed, watched the new arrivals eat beside the kitchen stove and listened to the story Mayo had for him.

The bedraggled cat lapped milk, protected from the resentful jealousy of the station's regular feline attaché by the one-eyed cook.

And afterward, closeted with Captain Downs and the station captain, Mayo went over his case.

"I must say you seem to be pretty hard and fast ashore in mighty sloppy water," commented the coast-guard captain. "It isn't my especial business —but what do you propose to do?"

"Go to New York and take what they're going to hand me, I suppose. I ought to have stayed there and faced the music. I have put myself in bad by running away. But I was rattled."

"The best of us get rattled," said the host consolingly. "I'm not a policeman, sheriff, or detective, mate. I'll report this case as Captain Downs and so many souls saved from the schooner *Alden*. You'd better trot along up to the city and face 'em as a man should. I'll rig you out in some of my clothes. Your old friend, Wass, meant well by rushing you away, but I've always found that in a man's fight you can't do much unless you're close enough to t'other fellow to hit him when he reaches for you."

A half hour later, made presentable in the coast-guard captain's liberty suit, Mayo walked through the kitchen. Bradish and the cook were still in front of the stove.

The captain's wife, standing in a door which admitted to an inner room, put up a finger to signal the young man and then nodded her head in invitation.

"The young lady wants to see you, sir," she informed him in a whisper when he stepped to her side. "Go in!"

She closed the door behind him and remained in the kitchen.

He stood in the middle of the room and gazed at the girl for some time, and neither of them spoke. She was swathed in blankets and was huddled in a big chair; her face was wan, and her eyes showed her weariness. But her voice was firm and earnest when she addressed him.

"Captain Mayo, what I am going to say to you will sound very strange. Tell me that you'll listen to me as you would listen to a man."

"I'm afraid——" he stammered.

"It's too bad that man and woman can seldom meet on the plane where man and man meet. But I don't want to be considered a girl, just now. I'm one human being, and you're another, and I owe something to you which must be paid, or I shall be disgraced by a debt which will worry me all my life." She put out her hands and knotted the fingers together in appeal. "Understand me—help me!"

He was ill at ease. His practical sailor mind suggested that the daughter of rich John Marston was about to offer him money.

"When we thought we were going to die I told you it seemed as if I had lived a life in a few hours—that I did not seem like the same person as I looked into my thoughts. Captain Mayo, that is true. It is more apparent to me now when I have had time to search my soul. Oh, I am not the Alma Marston who has been spoiled and indulged—a fool leaping here and there with every impulse—watching a girl in my set do a silly thing and then doing a sillier thing in order to astonish her. That has been our life in the city, sir. I never knew what it meant to be a mere human being, near death. You know you saved me from that death!"

"I only did what a man ought to do, Miss Marston."

"Perhaps! But you did it, that's the point. There are other men——"

She hesitated.

"I have had a talk with Mr. Bradish," she told him. "It was a mistake. You saved me from that mistake. You did it in the cabin of the schooner. It was better for me than saving my life."

"But because a man isn't a sailor—isn't used to danger——" he expostulated.

"That is not it, sir. I say, I have just had a talk with Mr. Bradish! I have found out exactly what he is. I did not find it out when I danced with

him. But now that I have come near to dying with him I have found him out."

The red banners in her cheeks signaled both shame and indignation.

"A coward will show all his nature before he gets himself in hand again, and Mr. Bradish has shown me that he is willing to ruin and disgrace me in order to make profit for himself. And there is no more to be said about him!"

She paused.

"Captain Mayo, I know what idea you must have of me—of a girl who would do what I have done! But you don't have half the scorn for me I have for myself—for the girl I was. But I have my self-respect now! I respect the woman that I am at this moment after that experience! Perhaps you don't understand. I do! I'm glad I have that self-respect. I shall face what is ahead of me. I shall do right from now on."

She spoke quickly and passionately, and he wanted to say something, but his sailor tongue halted.

"Again, Captain Mayo, I say that I want to stand with you as man to man! I want to render service for what you have done for me. In this case a gentleman would not insult another gentleman with money. You have lost everything out of your life that you value. I want you to have it back. Will you listen to me now with respect?"

"Yes, Miss Marston."

"You go to my father with a letter from me. I do not believe he knows what kind of methods have been practiced by his understrappers, but he can find out. You tell him that he must find out—that he must make them confess. You tell him that this is a man's fight, and that you are fighting back with all the strength you can command. You tell him that you have me hidden, and that I cannot get away—as my own letter will tell him. You tell him that he must make a fair exchange with you—give you back what is yours before he can have what is his."

Mayo walked backward limply, feeling for the wall with his hands behind him and leaned against it.

"You are single-handed—it's a big game they play up in the city when they are after money—and you must take what cards are offered," she insisted, displaying the shrewdness of the Marston nature.

"You mean to say that I'm going to your father as if I were holding you for ransom?" he gasped.

"Something like that," she returned eagerly. "The only way you'll get what you want—and get it quickly—is by a good bluff. I have had some good samples of your courage, Captain Mayo. You can do it beautifully."

"But I'm not going to do it!"

"I say you are!"

"Not by a——" His feelings were carrying him away. He was forgetting that these dealings were with a girl. His anger was mounting. She was putting him on the plane of a blackleg.

"Go ahead and talk as strongly as you like, Captain Mayo. It will make it seem like man's business between us."

"Those tricks may be all right on Wall Street, but they don't do for me. And you've got a pretty poor opinion of me if you think I'll do it."

"Don't be quixotic," she protested impatiently. "We are living in up-to-date times, Captain Mayo. Some of those underlings have played a nasty trick on you. They must be exposed."

"This is a girl's crazy notion!"

"Captain Mayo, is this the way you help me pay my debt?"

"You don't owe me anything."

"And now you pay me an insult! Are my honor as a girl and my life worth nothing? You have saved both."

"I don't know how to talk to you. I haven't had any experience in talking with women. I simply say that I'm not

going to your father in any such manner. Certainly not!"

"Don't you realize what I have offered you?" she pleaded. "You are throwing my sacrifice in my face. As the case stands now, I can hurry off to the home of some girl friend and make up a little story of a foolish lark, and my father will never know what has been happening. He expects me to do a lot of silly things."

"That's your business—and his," he returned dryly.

Her cheeks were reddened with a hot flush.

"Captain Mayo, I have been trying to show you that I am fit to be considered something beside a silly girl. I wanted you to know that I have a sense of obligation. The plan may seem like a girl's romantic notion. But it isn't. It's bold, and your case needs boldness. I was trying to show you that I'm not a coward. I was going to confess to my father what I have done and start on the level with him. You throw it all in my face—you insult my plan by calling it crazy."

"It is," he insisted doggedly. "And I'm in bad enough as it is!"

"Oh, you're afraid, then?"

He frowned. Her sneer seemed gratuitous injury. He did not understand that variety of feminine guile which seeks to goad to action one who refuses to be led.

"I admire boldness in a man when his case is desperate and he is trying to save himself. I have lived among men who are bold in going after what they want."

"I have had a little experience with that kind of land pirates, and I don't like the system."

"I shall not make any unnecessary sacrifices," she declared tartly, but there were tears in her eyes. "I did what I could to help you when you were trying to save me; why are you so ungenerous as to refuse to help me now?"

"It's taking advantage of you—of your position."

"But I offer it—I beg of you to do it."

"I will not do it."

"You absolutely refuse?"

"Yes, Miss Marston."

"Then I shall leave you to your own fate, Captain Mayo. You don't expect me to go to my father with the story, do you?"

"Certainly not."

"I shall go ahead now and protect myself the best I can. I am sure that Captain Downs will keep my secret. I shall forget that I ever sailed on that schooner. I suppose you will black yourself up and run away again!"

"I am going to New York."

"To be put in jail?"

"Probably."

"You make me very angry. After you have shown that you can fight, just when you ought to fight the hardest, you slink back to be whipped."

"Yes, Miss Marston, if you care to put it that way."

"Then, good-by!"

"Good-by!"

He bowed and left the room.

Captain Downs walked with Mayo for a distance across the sand dunes when the latter started to make his way to the nearest railroad station. The captain intended to remain at the inlet until a representative of the *Alden's* owners arrived.

They left Bradish still huddled behind the stove in the kitchen.

"Unless my eyes have gone back on me, Captain Mayo, my notion is that the dude is wasting his time hanging around that girl any more," suggested Captain Downs. "She has had him out on the marine railway of love, has made proper survey, and has decided that she would hate to sail the sea of matrimony with him. Don't you think that's so?"

"I think you're a good judge of what you see, Captain Downs."

"I reckon that you and I as gents and master mariners are going to keep mum about her being aboard the *Alden?*"

"Certainly, sir."

"The coast-guard crew don't know who she is, and they can't find out. So she can go home and mind her business from this time out. Most every woman does one infernal fool thing in her life—and then is all right ever after. But now a word on some subject that's sensible! What are you going to do?"

"Stick my head into the noose. It's about the only thing I can do."

"But you'll talk up to 'em, of course."

"I'll play what few cards I hold as best I know, sir. The most I can hope for is to make 'em drop that manslaughter case. Perhaps I can say enough so that they'll be afraid to bring me to trial. As to getting my papers back, I'm afraid that's out of the question. I'll have to start life over in something else."

"Mayo, why don't you go to the captain's office?"

He promptly answered the young man's glance of inquiry.

"John Adams Marston, himself, is the supreme boss of that steamship-consolidation business. Bradish gave all that part away, telling about those checks, though, of course, we all knew about Marston before. It is probably likely that Marston gives true courses to his understrappers. If they take fisherman's cuts between buoys in order to get there quick, I'll bet he doesn't know about it. Go to him and tell him, man to man, what has happened to you."

"There are two reasons why I shall probably never see Mr. Marston," returned Mayo grimly. "First, I'll be arrested before I can get across New York to his office; second, I'll never get farther than the outer office. He's guarded like the Czar of Russia, so they tell me."

"Does his girl know anything about your case?"

"I blabbed it to her—like a fool—when we were in the boat. Why is it that when a man is drunk or excited or in trouble, he'll blow the whole story of his life to any woman who purs in his ear?" growled Mayo.

"I've thought that over some, myself," admitted Captain Downs. "Especially on occasions when I've come to and realized what I've let out. I suppose it's this—more or less: A man don't tell his troubles to another man, for he knows that the other man is usually in'ardly glad of it because any friend is in trouble. But a woman's sympathy is like a mustard poultice—it soothes the ache and draws at the same time."

Mayo trudged on in silence, kicking the sand.

"Seems to me the smallest thing that girl could have done was to offer to get you a hearing with her old man. It was some chore you did for her, mate!"

"I had to save myself. A few more didn't matter. How could that girl drag me in to see her father without giving away the scrape she has been in?"

"That's right. These society girls think of themselves first, of course! I don't suppose you give a hoot for my advice, Captain Mayo, but I'm talking to you in the best spirit in the world."

"I know you are, Captain Downs," declared the young man, his sullenness departing. "I didn't mean to show bristles to you! I'll try to see Marston. It'll be a hard stunt. But I'm in the mood to try anything. By gad, if they lug me to jail, I'll go kicking!"

"That's the spirit, boy. And if you can get in a few kicks where John Marston can see 'em they may count. He's the boss! I don't think I'll go any farther with you. This is too hard footing for an old waddler like me. Good luck!"

They shook hands and turned their backs on each other with sailor repression in the matter of the emotions.

Mayo lurked that evening in the purlieus of Jersey City and entered the metropolis after midnight on a ferry-boat which had few passengers, and afforded him a dark corner where he was alone. He found lodgings in humble quarters on the East Side.

In the morning he nerved himself to the ordeal of appearing in the streets. His apprehension became almost agony as he walked along. His belief in his own innocence made his suffering greater as he waited for the clap of a heavy hand on his shoulder and the summons of an officer's voice. He knew that the eyes of Uncle Sam are sharp and his reach a long one. He had firm belief in the almost uncanny vigilance of government officers. He was rather surprised to find himself at last in the outer office of Marston & Waller.

He sat down on a bench and waited for a time in order to regain his self-possession. He wanted to be able to control features and voice before accosting one of the guardians of the magnate. But the espionage of the attendants did not permit loiterers to remain long in that place without explanation. A man tiptoed to him and asked his name and his business.

"My name doesn't matter," said Mayo. "But I have important business with Mr. Marston. If you will tell him that the business is most important—that it is something he ought to know, and that——"

"You haven't any appointment, then?"

"No."

"Do you think for one moment that you can get in to see Mr. Marston without giving your name and explaining beforehand the nature of your business?"

"I hoped so, for it is important."

"What is it?"

"It's private—it's something for Mr. Marston."

"Impossible!" was the man's curt rejoinder. He went back to his post.

In a few moments he returned to Mayo.

"You mustn't remain here. You cannot see Mr. Marston."

"Won't you take in a message from me? I'll explain——"

"Explain to me. That's what I'm here for."

Telling that cold-blooded person that this visitor was the broken and indicted master of the *Montana* was out of the question. To mention the case of the *Montana* to this watchdog was dangerous.

But Mayo dreaded to go back to the street again.

"I'll stay here a little while and perhaps I can——" he began.

"If you stay here without explaining your business I'll have you escorted down to the street by an officer, my friend."

Mayo rose and hurried out.

"An officer!" Even in his despairing and innocent quest of a hearing he was threatened with arrest!

He sneaked back to his lodgings and hid himself in the squalid apartment and nursed the misery of his soul.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HEROINE AND THE BREACH IN THE CITADEL.

That night Mayo sat till late, toiling over a letter addressed to John Adams Marston.

He dispatched it by messenger at an early hour, and mustered his courage in the middle of the forenoon and followed in person.

He assumed a boldness he did not feel in his quaking heart when he approached the guardian of the outer office.

"Will you ask Mr. Marston if he will see the man who sent him a letter by messenger this morning?"

"What letter? Signed by what name?"

"He will understand what letter I refer to."

"He will, will he?" The attendant gave this applicant sharp scrutiny. The coast-guard captain's liberty garments were not impressive, nor did they fit very well. Mayo displayed the embarrassment of the man who knew he was hunted. "Do you think that Mr. Marston receives only one letter by messenger in a morning? Look here, my man, you were in here yesterday, and I look on you as a suspicious character. You cannot see Mr. Marston on any such excuse. Get out of that door inside of one minute or I'll send in a police call!"

And once more Mayo fled from the danger which threatened him.

He bought a stock of newspapers at a sidewalk news stand; his hours of loneliness in his little room the day before had tortured him mentally. He sat himself down and read them scrupulously, lingering over matters in which he had no interest, striving to occupy his mind and drive the bitter thoughts and his fears away from him. Never in his life before had he read the society tattle in the newspapers. However, dragging along the columns, he found a paragraph on which he dwelt for a long time. It stated that Miss Marston of Fifth Avenue had returned by motor from a house party in the Catskills, accompanied by Miss Lana Vanadistine, who would be a house guest of Miss Marston for a few days.

That bit of news was significant. She had established her alibi; she had reinstated herself, and had turned a smooth front to the world.

Mayo was certain in his soul that he knew her kind. Now that her tragic experience was behind her, now that she was back among her own, now that the fervor of romance was cool, she was thanking God, so he told himself, that she had not sacrificed herself for a poor sailor. However, his conscience pricked him when he sourly reflected thus, for he remembered the tone of her voice and sincerity of her gaze.

But to take what she had offered would have been putting himself into the same class with Bradish, he pondered. He was honestly glad that she was at home, glad of the hint which the paragraph gave—that her secret was still her own, so far as family and the social world were concerned.

That night Mayo took further counsel with himself. In the morning his final decision was made. He would endeavor once more to see John Adams Marston. He determined that he would march into the outer office, boldly announce his name, assert that he was there to expose a crime, and tell them that if Mr. Marston refused to hear him he should tell what he knew to the public through the newspapers; then he would ask them to send for the police, if the door of Marston's office remained closed to him. He would call attention to himself and to his case by all the uproar he could make. When he went to jail he would go with plenty of folks looking on. Let John Marston and his fellow financiers see how they liked that!

It was a desperate and a crude plan, but Stanley Mayo was not a diplomat—he was a sailor.

He marched forth on his errand with his chin up and resolve flaming within him.

Other men, prosperous-looking and rotund men, rode up in the elevator with him and went into Marston & Waller's office ahead of him, for he had modestly stepped to one side to allow them to pass.

He heard some talk of a "board

meeting." It was plain that Mr. Marston was to be occupied for a time. This was not a favorable moment in which to project himself upon the attention of the financier; he needed a clear field. Therefore, he tramped up and down the corridor of the office building, watching the elevator door, waiting to see the rotund gentlemen go on their way. And with attention thus focused, he saw Miss Alma Marston arrive.

She waited until the elevator had passed on, and then she came directly to him.

Her expression did not reveal her mood except to hint that she was self-possessed.

"I am not especially surprised to find you here," she told him. "I believe you said to Captain Downs—so he informed me—that you were going to try to see my father. And men who try to see my father, without proper introduction, usually kick their heels outside his office for some days."

There was a bit of hauteur in her voice. She preserved much of the acerbity which had marked her demeanor when they had said good-by to each other. He would not acknowledge to himself that he hoped she would meet him on another plane; he meekly accepted her attitude as the proper one. He was a sailor, and she was the daughter of John Marston Adams.

"Do you blame me for being suspicious in regard to what you intend to say to my father?" she demanded. "I tell you frankly that I came here looking for you. We must settle our affair."

"I am trying to get word with him about my own business—simply my own business, Miss Marston."

"But as to me! What are you going to say to him about me? You remember I told you that I intended to protect myself," she declared, with some insolence.

"I thought you had a better opinion of me, after what I said to you," he protested. "Miss Marston, as far as I am concerned, you never were on that schooner. I know nothing about you. I do not even know you." He started away hastily. "Don't stay here. Don't speak to me. Somebody may see you."

"Come back here!"

He stopped.

"I demand an explicit promise from you that if you are able to talk with my father you will never mention my name to him or try to take advantage of the dreadful mistake I made."

"I promise, on my honor," he said, straightening.

"Thank you, sir."

"And now that I have promised," he added, red in his tanned cheeks, "I want to say to you, Miss Marston, that you have insulted me gratuitously. I suppose I'm not much in the way of a gentleman as you meet them in society. I'm only a sailor. But I'm neither a tattler nor a blackmailer. I know the square thing to do where a woman is concerned, and I would have done it without being put under a pledge."

He bowed and walked away.

She gazed after him, a queer sparkle in her eyes.

"Captain Mayo," she mused, "I have found you very hard to manage on a friendly basis. Let us see if I cannot do better by making you think that I'm your enemy. You're a big child when you're on shore!"

She entered the waiting room of the Marston & Waller suite, and was informed that her father was busy with a board meeting.

"But it's merely a bit of routine business—it will soon be over, Miss Marston—if you will be so good as to wait."

After a time the gentlemen filed out, but she waited on.

"Tell my father that I'm here and will be in presently," she commanded the guardian.

Before the messenger returned Mayo came in.

He tried to avoid her, but she met him face to face and accosted him with spirit.

"You have done me a great service, sir. We both know what it was. Now that I have put you on your honor, I'm not afraid to have you talk your business over with my father. Come with me. I will take you to him. Then we will call accounts square between us."

"Very well," he consented. "After what I have been through here, I feel that one service matches the other."

Mayo followed her and came into The Presence.

He saw a little man who was overshadowed by the towering back of a big chair, and the little man plucked at a narrow strip of beard and appeared to be rather astonished to find that his daughter had brought a companion.

She hurried around the desk and sat on the arm of his chair and smoothed his hair.

"Papa," she pleaded, and there was so much of wistfulness and urgency in her tones that he stared up at her, with a wrinkling of his brow, "will you give me a few moments and promise me that there will be no taps on the door, no ringing of the telephone?"

He hesitated, then he gave directions through his private telephone.

All the time he gazed at Mayo, standing in the middle of the room.

When Marston sat back in his chair the girl put her arm about him.

"Papa, I am going to tell you something that is very serious. But my conscience will not allow me to rest until I do tell it to you. You know I have never been a coward. You will be sorry —you will be ashamed—but after you hear it all and think it over and listen to the promise I make you, I believe you will be glad."

She saw his gaze wandering to the business papers on his desk. She knew the mental state of her father when he was in his office She resolved to nail that vagrant attention upon the subject in hand—to tear his mind off his business in heroic fashion, and what she said in the next breath did it.

"Father, a few days ago I ran away to be married!"

Marston gave her a wild-eyed side glance and then tried to leap out of his chair, turning his eyes on the man who stood in the middle of the room. She held him and pressed him back in his seat.

"No, this is not the man, papa!"

Captain Mayo was even more astonished than was the financier.

The young man gasped an apology and started for the door; he felt as if he were intruding upon the sacred privacy of a home.

"Stop that man, papa! Stop him! He must stay here. I insist on it. You will be sorry if you let him go!"

"Come back here, sir!" demanded Marston, getting his voice under control with difficulty. "Come back, I say! I shall have you stopped in the office!" He touched his desk telephone significantly when Mayo halted and looked over his shoulder.

"I protest, sir," cried Captain Mayo. "This is none of my affair. I'm here for something else. I'll not stay."

The girl was whispering to her astounded father.

"My daughter insists that it is necessary. You must stay if she asks it."

"It was all settled. It was talked over. I wouldn't have come in here if I had dreamed what your daughter was going to tell you," expostulated the young man, and his words simply added to Marston's bewilderment and curiosity. "It puts me in a false position. I don't propose to profit by it. I insist that I be allowed to leave."

"You must stay," declared the financier, with vigor. "I propose to have light on this amazing affair. If you

dare to go out of that door, sir, I'll have you brought back here by force!"

Raging, shocked by this astonishing outbreak from this incomprehensible girl, wondering what it would lead to, resenting his position with all the manly indignation of his soul, Captain Mayo reflected that it seemed to be even more difficult to get out of John Marston's private office than to get into it.

"Come here to the desk and sit down in that chair!" commanded the father. "Who are you?"

"That's for me to tell," said Alma Marston. "It's a strange story, papa, and you must listen carefully."

And then she told it, simply, contritely, but with dignity and with a tone that carried to her hearers the conviction that upon her remorse she had erected a new, sturdy edifice of character.

She had no blame to place upon anybody except herself, and her pathetic little reference to the mansion on the avenue where fashion and money had made the house a caravansary instead of a home was offered in wistful explanation of her own willful determination to be mistress of her own actions.

At first, when she confessed that she had chosen a man without regard to what opinions her father might entertain, Marston listened, his face drawn and rigid. His eyes stared straight ahead.

Once he muttered comment: "I didn't realize you had grown up. I was so busy—so busy!"

"Yes, papa," she said, interrupting her story and bending down to kiss him. "But after this we shall have time for each other's troubles—you and I. For I am grown up! And I lived a long, lone time in one night on the ocean!"

When she told the story of that night Marston's eyes fixed themselves on Mayo's face and studied the young man appraisingly as she described the happenings.

When she had finished she arose from the arm of the chair and stood before her father.

"So that is the end, papa! It seems as if it all happened years ago. I have made you feel ashamed of me. But I shall never give you cause to be ashamed of me again. I say, again, this is the man who saved me and brought me back to you."

"Who are you?" demanded Marston again.

"He is Captain Stanley Mayo, and he commanded the steamer *Montana,*" stated the girl. "He went as a sailor on that schooner because they were threatening to put him in prison."

Marston narrowed his eyes and stroked his beard.

"You can't tell me anything about the *Montana* affair," he said curtly. "I have had full particulars."

He turned to the girl.

"I cannot talk to you about your experience just now, Alma. I am too much hurt—too shocked—I must think it over. I am sorry you should have considered it necessary to have this man hear you tell me the story. We could have arranged about the reward without distressing me in this way."

Mayo leaped up and struck his fist on the desk.

He felt that he had been baited throughout in the affair. He understood, in a measure, the motives of the girl—he felt almost a sense of awe for her courage, her amazing immolation of herself. He had not comprehended the depths of her nature, he admitted to himself. Her actions prior to the interview with her father had been enigmatical. But although he admired her for what she had done, he felt a rather curious sense of anger because she had made this sacrifice for such a man as he was. He realized that his emotions in regard to her were very complex.

But as to his bitterness in regard to John Marston, there was no doubt in

his mind. It was angry resentment, undiluted.

While the girl had told the story the financier had looked at him with about the same interest he would have bestowed on a dog who had leaped into the water to retrieve a stick. It was plain that John Marston's soul lacked all imagination. He could not picture the agonizing moments she had described. Into that office on Wall Street red-blooded adventure never came; it was a temple sacred to money—to the cold, calculating consideration of profit and loss.

The young man's red blood was chilled by this indifference, but his temper was heated white hot.

"Look here, Mr. Marston," he cried, "do you think I have come here like a storybook hero, expecting you to hand me a fortune and say, "Bless you, my children'?" In his passion he did not consider well what he was saying. "I have protested against Miss Marston telling you what she has. It's none of my business. I want no favors from you or from her. I want my rights. I want what has been robbed from me by the dirty dogs who operate for you."

"I allow nobody to talk to me——" Marston rose, his countenance bodeful.

"*I'll* talk to you! I'm at the end of human endurance. You're going to listen to me."

The financier reached for his telephone. The sailor's quick eye noted where the wires extended under the edge of the desk. He pulled his clasp knife and cut the cable, using all his strength in the effort.

"This is no holdup, Mr. Marston, though it may seem that way," he panted. "But I propose to have my word with you before I'm shoved into prison. I don't know what report Fletcher Fogg gave you about the *Montana* matter. I don't care. I'm honest with you. I'm going to confess that I don't know exactly what he did do when he came into my pilot house that night. But I've heard enough to know that he worked a trick and is responsible for the wreck of the steamer and what happened to that schooner we struck. Mr. Marston, you have the power to investigate this matter, and can force the truth out of Fogg. If you're in with him in this attempt to ruin a poor man, then I'll quit, here and now. I can't fight you."

"Do you insinuate that I'm a party to any plot to wreck a steamship?"

"I stand here and tell you to your face that you are, unless you show a willingness to probe the matter. If you turn your back on it after what I have said, the thing is self-evident."

"You insult me."

"I don't mean to—if you're innocent, sir. Probably you didn't mean to insult me when you talked of a reward. Mr. Marston, I'm fighting for all that's worth while in life to me. My reputation as a master mariner, my chance to make a living in my work! If you let me go out of this room without a promise that you'll go to the bottom of this thing, I'll give the newspapers the story of what happened, and will let the public judge."

His tone and demeanor changed suddenly. He spread out his hands.

"I don't want to threaten. I want justice of you, man to man, that's all! I'm only a little fellow in the big game. You don't come in touch with the little fellows. You only see results. But here's a chance for you to find out about some of the things which are done in your name. You're pretty high above details, Mr. Marston, when you sit up here in this office. But some day those details will show up bad—bad!"

Marston sat down and fixed more of the appraising regard on the young man.

"Alma," he said, after a long pause, "tell them in the outer office to summon Mr. Fogg, and have him hurry."

There was triumph in the look she gave Mayo as she hurried out.

"While we are waiting you may tell me your side of the *Montana* case," directed the financier. The girl returned and stood beside her father and listened.

Fletcher Fogg was plainly astonished when he entered the office, and Marston gave him no time to recover from his astonishment. He fairly hurled this question at him: "Mr. Fogg, exactly what did you do in the pilot house of the steamer *Montana* to divert her course?"

"Why—you see—as a matter of mere detail—it was——" stammered the promoter.

Mr. Marston vibrated a thin finger, upraised.

"You are not cutting sharp corners in your field work just now," said the master dryly. "You are talking to me, and I have asked you a plain question, and you know what that means, Mr. Fogg."

"I'll tell you in private, sir."

"You'll tell me in the presence of Captain Mayo. I repeat the question: How did you disturb that steamer's compass?"

"Of course, it didn't come out as we planned it," faltered the agent. "As we figured, it would merely put the steamer out——"

"How did you do it? That's my question."

"Why—a—a piece of metal in my pocket—Burkett's idea. But I'll explain just how we intended——"

"We'll have those explanations later, sir. I did not counsel piracy when I told you to achieve results, Mr. Fogg. There's only one way of avoiding a very serious scandal. Whatever you have done in the matter of the Vose line, go back to the start and undo it."

Mr. Fogg dabbed his purple handkerchief upon his moist cheeks.

"It can be undone quickly, can't it?"

"I can turn back the control. The line has received full indemnity for all damage to the *Montana*. But the indictment of Captain Mayo——"

"Our counsel will handle that matter," snapped the financier. "If it can't be settled in any other manner, I'll have the grand jury indict you, Fogg. I think it ought to be done. That's all! Now go about your work!"

After the promoter had tiptoed out, Marston turned to his daughter.

"I hope I have shown you that I can be grateful, my girl," he told her. "I was not myself for a time. You must understand that what you told me was a bitter story for a father to hear. But the fact that you were honest and did tell me comforts me, my dear. Now go home! We'll have a talk to-night."

She gave her hand to Mayo for a moment, pausing as she passed him.

"Do you understand better now?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss Marston."

"You were such a big child! But you have helped me to unload some of the burden from my conscience. Good-by, sir!"

He bowed, and returned her farewell gravely.

"Captain Mayo," said the financier, when they were alone, "I wish you would return to this office at three this afternoon and I will have my counsel here, and we will take measures to protect you and to restore your papers. It has been bad business all through, but we shall come out, somehow. Where is Bradish?"

"I do not know, sir."

"You found him something of a cur, eh, when the veneer got cracked?"

"He is not a sailor, sir. I excuse a landsman many things at sea."

"Seeing that you are deep into this sad affair of my daughter's, I may as well tell you that I shall find Bradish and take him back into our office. It's

the old adage about the best way to crush the thistle with the bare hand, you understand! That folly will never occur again. He will keep still. And between us, Captain Mayo!"

He put out his hand, and the young man clasped it, and a compact was sealed without words.

"At three o'clock, Captain Mayo!"

"At three, sir!"

When Mayo stepped out upon the street he saw Miss Marston in her car, waiting at the curb. He obeyed the hint of invitation in her eyes, and stepped to her side.

"I wanted to be sure that all is right between you and my father."

"I think so. I am going back at three o'clock, and he says that his counsel will take care of my case."

"That is all I wished to know." But she did not give an order to her driver.

"Yes, I suppose that is all—all there is," he murmured. He ran his finger along the polished wood of the car's door and did not look up at her.

"Only I'd like to say," he went on, after a pause, stumbling over his words, "that I hope you won't go away and remember me simply as a fool who didn't have eyes or appreciation of what you are. A man up on the level where you are couldn't say what I'm going to say. But you're going away, and I'll probably never meet you again. I'm so far down below you in every way that I can say this because it's ridiculous, and will give you a good laugh when you tell the story in society. But when I first laid eyes on you in the cabin of the *Alden* I reckon I must have fallen in love with you, for I could seem to see right into your heart and know you were in a dream—that it wasn't your real self that wanted to marry that fellow. And when we got so close to death I loved you all the more, and I had to set my teeth to keep from telling you so. You're brave and beautiful, Miss Marston, and there's a plain sailor's heart opened to you! And it's closed again forever! Good-by!"

He turned and hurried away up the street.

His eyes were blind with sudden tears, but he realized that somebody was calling to him. Her car was skirting the curb at his side.

She put out her hand when the car halted, and he took it, and she leaned close and whispered to him:

"I was disappointed in you that day at the life-saving station. It's a wonderful experience to go down to the gates of death together and come back hand in hand. Don't think I am a silly flirt. I am not what I was a week ago, Captain Mayo. When you seemed to fail in courage, when you refused to go after what you wanted, I was disappointed. But after hearing you in that interview with my father, I believe you will always get what you go after, sir! Remember, you are young, and this is free America!"

She gave hasty command to the chauffeur, and the car jerked forward and lost itself in the traffic of the roaring street.

But the radiance of the glorious smile which she flashed to him over the side of the tonneau burned into his understanding as he had seen mists at sea shot through by the sunshine. He stood there, careless of the elbow thrusts of the throng, striving to make himself believe that he had heard aright.

A sterner analyst of character might not have experienced the joy Mayo felt then. A calmer and more skeptical person might have questioned the sincerity of the impulsive and very human girl who had just left him. He might have wondered how she could be so quickly off with the old love in order to encourage the new.

But Stanley Mayo, young, in love for the first time, ready to grasp at straws

of joy, was not in the mood to doubt her.

He had just come up from the valley of the shadow in company with her. There is a psychology in the sudden veering of human affections when the soul has been stirred which not even the wise men can explain; Mayo was not wise in the ways of the heart. He only knew that he loved her; she had tossed him a morsel of encouragement. And, with face alight, all his spirit stirring with a new incentive to work and to achieve, he trudged on his way.

Captain Zoradus Wass, who still rules old *Nequasset* while she wallows up and down the coast, does not pretend to be a prophet or the seventh son of a seventh son, but he lays claim to a certain amount of prescience, and when he is in a reminiscent mood he will explain:

"I says to him one day, 'Be a purser on one of John Adams Marston's sky-hooting steamers, if you can't get any higher job.' He didn't take my advice, not exactly. He let himself be hornswoggled aboard the *Montana*.

"No matter what happened, it wasn't his fault. Then I says to him, 'Run, and don't let the land pirates get a line aboard you till you are ready to close in and fight 'em.'

"I don't know just what happened then—he won't talk about it. But he ain't ever blamed me for giving him that advice. He always gives me a queer look, and smiles.

"At any rate, he got in mighty close with John Adams Marston, and he worked up from master of the *Triton* to what he is now—and that's captain manager of the whole blamed steamship system—and everybody allows that he's the right man for the place.

"And I says to him on that one day I've been speaking of, 'A chap with your looks can catch an heiress. You might even be able to catch John Marston's daughter herself!' I told him just that—and he called it a joke. But, gash blast him, he has been and gone and done it!"

THE BEST SPY STORY SINCE "SECRET SERVICE"

Not since William Gillett appeared in "Secret Service" has New York had so stirring a play as

Inside the Lines

By
Earl Derr Biggers
Author of "Seven Keys to Baldpate"

We are glad to announce that a novelization of the play will be published in the POPULAR, beginning with the next issue, July 7th, and concluding with the issue on sale August 23rd.

Mr. Biggers has for collaborator in the novelized version ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE
Author of "The Sandlotter"

Art for McHenry's Sake

By Holworthy Hall

Author of "Pepper," "The Terrible Freshman," Etc.

The business career of Pepper McHenry. He had two mottoes which will appeal to every man who wants to make money: First, "Give the people what they think they want;" and, second, "No money is wasted that gets publicity"

THERE was once a stocky, clear-eyed young man who came to New York from Findlay, Ohio, where his father was in the lumber business, established himself in a dilapidated studio on West Twenty-third Street, and set out to be an artist. For such a man there are generally two alternatives: he either succeeds so brilliantly that his father is ready to burst with honest pride, or, at the end of perhaps two years, he returns disconsolate to Findlay, Ohio, where he is put to checking invoices at eight dollars a week, and tries desperately not to know what the neighbors are saying about him.

As a matter of fact, Burgess didn't succeed at all, and his father never forgave him, but he stayed right in New York, smoking and painting incessantly, and eating whenever he could afford that transient luxury, and he had never been so happy in his life.

Just below him, on the fifth floor of the studio building, lived a young man named Dillingham, and in the course of time they became friends; so that Burgess was neither astonished nor alarmed when one evening he heard a terrific series of kicks on the lower panel of his door, accompanied by the insistent demand of Dillingham for immediate admission.

Opening the door, Burgess perceived his friend and another young man, who also appeared friendly.

"Hello, Rembrandt!" said Dillingham. "I want you to meet an old running mate of mine—Pepper McHenry. He's going to live downstairs with me. Shake hands like a nice boy, Pepper."

"Enter—to grow in wisdom," invited the artist. "Unless you brought something to smoke, though, you're in wrong—I'm down to a pipe."

"McHenry's infested with money," said Dillingham, dropping to the divan under the eaves. "Give my friend Mr. Gainsborough one of those middleweight cigars, Pep, and then put one in my mouth and light it, will you? I'm tired."

McHenry laughed, and produced the cigars.

"Are you two really going to live together?" inquired Burgess. "Thank you—this changes the calendar. It's now Sunday." He lighted the perfecto, and smoked ecstatically.

"We're going in business together," explained Pepper, "so I thought I'd better keep my eye on him. This is a regular he-studio you have, isn't it?"

"Neat, but not gaudy," said Dillingham from the divan. "Look around, Pep; Murillo won't mind. Only don't make the same mistake I did—those beer bottles on the mantel contain not beer, but benzine."

This new series of Pepper McHenry began in the POPULAR dated June 7.

McHenry was already looking around with lively interest. What he saw was a large, bare room without carpet or floor covering of any kind; a room divided by a Japanese screen into two sections, one of which was obviously intended for sleep, and the other for work. In the art department there was an immense easel backed against a Franklin stove; there were paints and pigments scattered about on decrepit chairs, and a foreshortened table, and there were dozens of unframed canvases roosting wherever the irregularity of the walls offered a foothold, and piled carelessly in secluded places under the eaves. In the sleeping department there was an army cot, with a pineapple cheese and a package of biscuits on it.

"I've always wondered what it would be like to be a bohemian," said McHenry reflectively. "This is a bully place, isn't it?"

"Look at this little sketch," said Burgess, winking at Dillingham. He dragged a small landscape from the pile on the stove, dusted it, and placed it on the easel. "Care for it?"

"Did *you* do that? Why, I call that darned good!"

"How much will you give for it?"

McHenry was visibly perturbed.

"Why, you see—to tell the truth, Mr. Burgess, I don't think I'm in the market."

The artist grinned and returned the painting to the stove.

"That remark," he said, "concludes a one-act comedy entitled, 'The Merry, Merry Life of the Artist Lad.' That's what they all say. That's art—and that's bohemia."

"Kid him a little harder, Whistler," advised Dillingham. "You've got him groggy already; it's the first time in five years I've seen him blush. Soak it to him!"

"No," said McHenry, much embarrassed, "I'm sure he knows I wasn't—er——"

"Art," observed the artist, sitting on the window ledge, "is a fine young game. Sometimes I think I'd be better off if I'd studied the billboard end of it instead of this one."

"But if there isn't a profit in it why do you stick to it?" demanded Pepper, always commercial.

"Why, I like it—that's all."

"As a portrait painter," said Dillingham carelessly, "my friend Corot is one of the best violinists I ever met. Play for the gentleman, Corry."

"Strings busted," said Burgess. "You'll have to wait until I sell something."

McHenry, unused to this frank confession of abject poverty, was thoroughly uncomfortable, and although he liked Burgess on sight he was glad when Dillingham finished his cigar and threatened to depart. Furthermore, he had an idea, which he promptly broached to Dillingham as soon as they were in the quarters they had agreed to share.

"Pierce," said McHenry thoughtfully, "do you know that boy is *good!*"

"Of course he's good."

"Well, why doesn't he make some money, then?"

"You ought to know. Some people get rich by instinct, and some don't. He's the worst salesman in the world."

"I'm willing to bet," pondered Pepper, "that we could take that man and press agent him a little and rig up his place with the right sort of atmosphere and cash in on it."

"Now look here!" said Dillingham. "We bargained to clean up this ink and glue business——"

"No, we didn't!" interrupted Pepper. "We bargained to be a couple of promoters. Promoters *promote!* Besides, this scheme wouldn't take any time at all from our regular business, and I can see money in it—large gobs of easy

money. A quick turnover, you know. Hit, duck, and get away."

"Well, he's a friend of mine," objected Dillingham aggrievedly.

"Why, you don't suppose I'm going to bunko *him,* do you?"

"Who are you going to bunko?"

"Nobody. Everybody'll be satisfied, and Burgess ought to have more bankable funds in the next six months than he's ever seen in all his life. How well does he play the violin?"

"Like a shark—but I don't see what that has to do with it."

"It's the biggest part of it. Wait a second. On the whole, you'd better put the proposition up to him, because I don't know him well enough. How much does he get for his junk when he sells it?"

"Oh, a hundred or so. It's darned good stuff, Pepper, but the mutt hasn't any initiative. He just slobbers paint on a piece of sailcloth, and then waits for Andrew Carnegie to come bounding up the stairs, trying to get there before John D. Rockefeller."

"His stuff looks *too* good," said McHenry, caressing his knee affectionately. "You take that thing he showed me first. As soon as I looked at it I knew it was a cow in a hayfield. That isn't what people want. It doesn't do a man any good to buy a picture and hang it on the wall and then have everybody from the butcher to the landlord know it's a cow in a hayfield! That doesn't get you anywhere. You want the kind of picture that makes a man get off in the corner and squint at it two or three times and lean over and look at it sideways, and then realize all of a sudden that it's an animal of some kind—and then by and by, when he finally gets it into his head that it's a cow, he's tickled to death. That's *art!* Why, out home we've got a big picture of a sunset in southern France; my father paid a thousand dollars for it, and when somebody comes to dinner he'll lead 'em out in front of it and ask what they think of it. And they back off—one man backed clear out into the hall—and say it's the most marvelous thing for the price they've ever seen. Then, on the side, I always used to ask 'em what they thought it was, and the only fellow who didn't think it was a prairie fire thought it was a picture of the Fourth of July in Minneapolis behind the grain elevators. And my father's been offered *two* thousand dollars for it!"

"Well——"

"Well, my scheme would be to put Burgess on a salary for a while. We'd form a separate corporation, with the Cambridge Company holding fifty-one per cent of the stock and Burgess the other forty-nine. We'd pay him something like fifteen dollars a day for six hours' steady work, and he'd make over to us, on a contingent basis, all the chromos he has littering up his place now. Then we'd deduct our expenses from the profits and split the difference. It seems to me we ought to gather in two or three thousand apiece——"

"Oh, Pepper!" deprecated his friend. "You don't know what you're talking about. He hasn't made five hundred dollars a year!"

"Why, you poor ape," said McHenry kindly, "if he had he wouldn't need us. That's exactly the point. We'll get him started, take a profit for doing it, and then sell him back our stock. It'll be a mighty good thing for him."

"Sell him stock in *himself?*"

"Sure! And we can work it up in odd moments, too. It won't interfere at all with the ink business. You go on up and make this proposition; we incorporate Burgess for twice as much as he thinks all his stuff on hand is worth. He puts in the pictures and we put in either cash or good will, I haven't decided which. Then we'll pay him a regular salary of—well, make it fifty

dollars a week, and we'll make a contract for a few months. We'll also agree that we won't sell any picture at a price which won't make his share for it at least as much as he's getting now. And we'll agree at the end of six months to sell him back *our* stock for exactly the amount of cash we have to put up now for the promotion. You go on up and tell him, and you tell him that if he wants a guarantee of good faith——"

"Leave it to me!" said Dillingham, and he obligingly got up and climbed the stairs.

Three minutes later he dashed back into the room and grabbed McHenry by the sleeve.

"Hurry up!" he exclaimed. *"Beat* it!"

"What's the matter?" demanded McHenry. "Has he fainted?"

"Fainted! He's loading himself up with pictures, and he's going to bring 'em down here and dump 'em on us!"

"Not if I know it!" said Pepper, springing to his feet. "Christmas! Isn't it enough to capitalize the poor dub without having to look at his pictures all the time? Tell him if he brings *one sketch* into this palatial apartment the deal's off. Thunder! He didn't think *we* were going to buy his agricultural chromos, did he?"

In the studio of Mr. Watson Burgess, the artist, attired in black, with a flowing black silk tie, posed gracefully before his easel and finally added a delicate stroke to the fiery creation on the canvas. Then he removed his spectacles and rubbed his eyes wearily.

"Gosh! Those things hurt me to look through," he remarked protestingly.

James Pepper McHenry, who had been peering over his shoulder, thumped it in approval.

"It's great work just the same, old boy!"

"Great work!" Burgess sniffed. "When I think what I'm doing I'm almost tempted to go down and jump off the dock!" He took the spectacles, regarded them savagely, and smashed them on the floor. "There! I'm *through!*" he yelled.

"I knew it before you told me," said Pepper complacently. "But you don't need to act mad about it. If you couldn't be an impressionist any other way you had to wear glasses. And they were the strongest I could get."

"If you want to know what I meant to paint in that picture," growled Burgess, "you'd have to hang it on the roof of Madison Square Garden and then go down to the Statue of Liberty!"

"Fine! Fine!" complimented McHenry. "It's your masterpiece. If I hadn't told you what to put in it I'd think it was a piece of ham on a radiator."

"It isn't art, McHenry."

"How do *you* know? My motto is to give the people what they think they want. If the great American public thinks it's art it *is* art. And the answer is, how much have you sold?"

Burgess shook his head.

"It's awful—*awful!* To remember the trouble I had to sell *good* work—and then this!"

"But when we've disposed of this last bunch," McHenry reminded him, "you can paint just as you like. That's the beauty of it. You've got a reputation. Now you can suit yourself."

"And this bunk studio!" groaned Burgess. "It'll take me twenty years to forget it. Look at it! *Look* at it!"

McHenry looked proudly.

From the point of view of bohemianism it was a gem.

The floor was still bare, save for two small rugs, which were, respectively, the eleventh and twelfth that Dillingham had ordered from his father's rug factory. The others had been sold, unsolicited, to connoisseurs.

In place of the army cot was the

divan, draped with a gorgeous Oriental fabric worth, at a conservative estimate, twice the value of all the other furnishings in the room. On it was a Maltese cat, a violin, and a ginger jar. The windows were hung with exotic tapestries, frayed and moth-eaten.

On the walls were unframed canvases, many of them only half finished, but all bearing the hopelessly illegible signature of W. Burgess.

The furniture of the room was partly Sheraton, partly Chippendale, and partly Grand Rapids; and the minor decorations included medieval armor, curious books bought by McHenry at auction, Chinese images, a smirking Es-Opet from the upper Nile, strange smoking utensils from foreign lands, and quaint little engravings and etchings pasted directly to the woodwork.

The studio was a combination of the æsthetic, the antique, and the second-hand shop; and it was so designed that no visitor, seated or standing in any part of the room, could fail to observe at least a score of objects which his eye had never previously seen.

Where the lurch of the roof provided dim little corners and angles there were white mice in a cage, a determined young monkey attached by a chain to the rafters, a bale of sheet music, and a phonograph with six or seven modern dance records.

In a majolica vase on a pine table was perhaps seventy-five dollars in money, and beside it stood a censer from which was wafted a peculiarly sickening odor of incense.

"Personally," said McHenry, "this strikes me as a—*so* charming, and—and all that——"

"Pepper," roared the artist, "shut up! If you repeat *once more* what those crazy old hens said in this place I'll heave you out the window."

"You're a grateful cuss, you are," retorted McHenry. "Here I'm taking time from my regular business to make a genius out of you, and you threaten me for it. Do you know what those old hens meant to us?".

"Oh, they bought something," said Burgess sulkily.

"They did exactly that. The old one bought your tint poem for a hundred and fifty seeds. The medium one bought your portrait of a gentleman—and I'll be hanged if he looked like one—for two hundred, and the little one with the giggles bought the thing that looked like a melancholy watermelon for a hundred and a quarter. And then you malign me when I quote the sweet things they said about your studio. My dear man, do you grasp the fact that you're the only cubist artist in captivity in New York at this moment? Here these people go up to the armory and see the magnificent works of the rabbit fiends, and get prices on them, and throw fits—and then along comes your friend J. P. McHenry, with the finest lot of press dope ever put over in the metropolitan papers, and gets 'em coming around to see you. And, unprejudiced as I am, your stuff has got Picasso leaning against the ropes. Because if you have the time to look at his you can eventually figure out what it's meant to be. Look out! Somebody's coming."

The door opened gently, and a white-whiskered gentleman appeared on the threshold.

"May I come in?" he inquired.

"Come on," said McHenry.

"I've been telling some of my friends about the picture I——" He noted McHenry's frantic gestures, and stuttered. "I should say your pictures. They'll be up presently to look at them."

Mr. Burgess turned upon the white-whiskered gentleman with a snort of disgust.

"Bah!" he ejaculated, with telling effect, and then he picked up a palette knife and smeared gamboge upon his latest production.

"Most curious man—very," said the white-whiskered gentleman in an undertone to McHenry. "I never heard before of an artist so reluctant to sell his work."

"His soul's above it," said Pepper nonchalantly. "But for Heaven's sake don't talk about stuff you've already bought. He hates to see a man after he's sold him a painting—he thinks of him almost as a robber."

"Even if he comes to buy another?"

"That might be different," admitted Pepper. "I can't really say."

Here Burgess tossed the palette knife to the floor, stepped on it, shrugged his shoulders, and went over to the divan, where he stroked the cat for a moment and then lifted the violin to place. He played very well indeed, and he played his best when he heard footsteps on the stairs, so that he had nothing to be ashamed of when his next assortment of visitors came in. As usual, he ignored them. He continued to play to the Maltese cat and to himself, until McHenry had made coffee in a Russian vessel and handed out cigarettes which tasted like scorched wheat. Then for the first time he granted them a small measure of his precious attention.

There were three men and four women, and they were regarding him as they might have regarded a new importation in a menagerie.

"He's always like this," said McHenry to the woman nearest him. "But I know him very well—he lets me do anything up here—wouldn't you like to look at his pictures?"

"I'd love to," she said, and McHenry accordingly led a personally conducted tour about the room.

"How much does he get for these?" whispered the woman suddenly.

"Money's immaterial to him," said Pepper. "It's art for art's sake, you know. I don't even imagine that he'd sell one."

"He—he wouldn't *sell* one!" She turned to gaze reproachfully at the white-whiskered gentleman.

"Well, it took Mr. Sampson three days to get the one he wanted. You can get an idea of how much he cares for money; there's where he leaves it." He indicated the majolica jar. There was a little rustle of surprise among the women.

"But—if he *would* sell one?"

"Oh, a hundred and fifty, or two hundred dollars."

"For this one?"

She was looking at an extraordinarily cubistic painting of a man engaged in the unusual occupation of walking.

"Oh, I think he'd want about two hundred for that."

The woman began to whisper rapidly to one of her friends. McHenry overheard snatches of the conversation.

"Why, at the cubist show they wanted two thousand for one not half so big—oh, it's all the rage—there's no question about it, dear—you *must* have some cubist paintings—they say this is the only true cubist in America—why, I don't *think* he's an artist——"

She addressed McHenry.

"Are *you* an artist, too?" she queried.

"Not in a thousand years," he told her. "I'm in the ink and glue business. Burgess happens to be a friend of mine, and I like to have people like his work. That's all."

"My friend doesn't like cubist work," she said.

McHenry put a finger on his lips and glanced at Burgess, who was drinking coffee.

"I'll show you some of his other work. He loathes it himself—he says it's just photography—but you look!"

From a dusty recess he produced two of Burgess' very best paintings; one of them chanced to be the original landscape he had shown McHenry.

"There!" he said. "What do you think of them?"

After the terrible riot of color they

had been inspecting the landscapes were singularly refreshing, and apart from the comparison they were excellently done.

"That's *my* style!" exclaimed the second woman.

"There are only two or three of these in existence," said McHenry. "After they're gone——" He shrugged his shoulders.

Again the women chattered.

"They ought to be valuable if he doesn't do any more—oh, a man like this is *sure* to be great—well, that's the advantage—if you can find one who's just *beginning* to catch on—well, I read it in the papers myself, in a Sunday special—that's the very divan there—wouldn't you *adore* to have those tapestries in your own house?"

"Is he really queer, or does he just act like this for the advertising?" demanded the first woman.

"Honestly, I think he puts it on," said Pepper truthfully. "But you never can tell—and when you come right down to it there isn't much difference in the queerness of a man who's this way naturally and one who puts it on, is there?"

"No-o. I suppose not."

"Is this for sale, do you know?" She referred to the cow.

"I don't think so—I'll find out."

He went to Burgess, who shook his head violently.

"He won't sell it," reported Pepper.

"Oh, that's too bad!"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he volunteered. "Some time I'll find out if he'll let *me* have it, and then—you see—and in the meantime you can come in again, you know."

"I certainly *must* have one of these pictures——"

"Say," said one of the men, touching McHenry on the arm, "I don't give a hang about art, but there's a piece of china over here my wife might like. Is it for sale?"

"Excuse me," said the second man, "but this is a corking good rug we're standing on."

When Dillingham came home that night he found Pepper jubilant.

"Great!" said McHenry. "Simply great! Couldn't be better. You'll have to order some more rugs from your dad. We sold one this afternoon. And the pictures are going like hot cakes. The boy played the violin like a wizard, and the monkey got loose, and Burgess got mad because somebody criticized a picture, and he simply picked it up and busted it on a beam, and everybody had a wonderful time."

"What's left?" asked Dillingham.

"Mighty little. It's helped us tremendously to have the cubist show in town, and everything up there at high prices. So every one naturally gives Burgess' joint the once over, dopes it out that he doesn't need money, figures that his prices are low on that account, and falls."

"But this cubist thing is only a fad—it'll blow over in one season."

"Of course it will. And in the meantime Burgess'll have enough capital to finance himself for three or four seasons. That's the beauty of it! He's sold nearly all his good stuff already, and it *is* good. And the freaks buy the freak stuff. By the way, we need another set of that punk china."

"Did they dance?"

"Dance? You bet they did! You didn't suppose they'd lose a chance like that, do you? To go home and tell their friends they had a dance in a joint like that, with crazy knickknacks all over it, and a character right out of "La Vie de Boheme" playing the violin against the phonograph! Guess again!"

"I don't need to," said Dillingham. "Just the same I'm glad that we're getting near the finish. When do we stage the climax?"

"In about a week."

"We'll have to be darned careful," warned his friend. "We can get into a lot of trouble if we aren't."

"I'll look after that," promised McHenry. "And before I forget it, see if you can't cook up some scheme for that night that'll get Burgess' name in the papers. He really ought to be giving a dinner to a lot of celebrities, but unfortunately he doesn't know any."

"He might get run over by a taxicab," suggested Dillingham rather doubtfully.

"Well, that's a good lead—we'll do the next best thing. Get him arrested. They *can't* keep that out of the papers."

"Get Burgess arrested!"

"Absolutely. Have him take a taxi to some outlandish place, and have a row with the driver. When he's pinched have him demand Queen Victoria or somebody else important. Then the next morning he'll be fined, and you can go down and hand him five or six hundred dollars in gold. That'll make a hit naturally. Then when he starts to go out he can give five-dollar gold pieces to the policemen and the attendants——"

"It looks to me like a waste of money, Pep——"

"No money is wasted that gets publicity. You fix it up, will you? I'm going to be busy on the inside work."

"What's your trouble?"

"I've got to interview the art dealers. One or two of them have bitten already. This time we ring the bell!"

"Ring it, Pepper!" said Dillingham hopefully. "Ring it! I'm listening!"

A man who is casually eccentric is a crank. A man who is amusingly eccentric is a comedian. But a man who is overpoweringly and irritatingly and successfully eccentric is a genius, and that is what McHenry had planned to make out of his friend Burgess. In the first place, he had made good "copy" out of him; he had greased the tracks to free publicity, and made his name known to that circle of social and artistic hangers-on who revel in the stale air of what they fondly imagine to be bohemia. He had snatched eagerly at the momentary fad of cubist art, and touted Burgess as the only living American exponent of it. He had surreptitiously taken a few of Burgess' best works to indifferent dealers, persuaded them to display the paintings, and sent Dillingham in to buy them back a week later. He was now ready for the catastrophe, and he managed it with characteristic skill.

Late Saturday night—but not too late to catch the first Sunday editions—McHenry slipped out of his room and upstairs to the studio which was already acquiring some notoriety. He closed the door carefully behind him, saw that the windows were closely screened, and lighted the gas. The monkey made rapid sounds of welcome, but McHenry heeded him not, nor did he grant more than a hushed compliment to the Maltese cat. He merely saw that there was a high heap of sketches and half-finished oils piled on the sheet of zinc to the rear of the Franklin stove, that no hangings were likely to blow that way, and that directly overhead were the bricks of the chimney, and not the dangerous projections of the rafters.

With a broad grin of satisfaction McHenry located a box of parlor matches, removed all but a half dozen, and dropped the box so that it was partly hidden under the lowest canvas. Then he took the monkey, which protested violently, and tethered it so that the chain was just long enough to permit the animal to touch the match box. Then he calmly struck a match, dropped it where it would do the most good, and departed as quietly as he had come.

Three minutes later McHenry

emerged from his room on the fifth floor and yelled: "O-o-oh, Burgess!"

Although he knew perfectly well where Burgess was, he showed himself an excellent actor by looking much astonished when he got no response.

He yelled again: "O-o-oh, you Burgess!" and went up a few stairs.

Then he went all the way, peeped inside the door, thrust his head over the banisters, and howled: "Fire!"

By the time the men on the fourth floor reached him he had an extinguisher in operation, and was cursing the monkey. The other men waded valiantly into the pile of paintings, stamped on them, douched them with cold water, and within five minutes succeeded in giving the studio all the local color ever fancied by McHenry in his wildest dreams. Then they stopped to take breath and to congratulate each other.

"Why, look here!" cried one of them excitedly. "It must have been that confounded insect over there! Look at this!"

"What?" they chorused, crowding around him.

"Why, these matches. The blamed little vermin must have got hold of them somewhere—why, *sure!* Don't you see where he's hitched? He could just about make it."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" said McHenry slowly.

"It's a pretty hard crack for Burgess," said another man compassionately. "The whole mess is gone. But he's fixed the place up considerably since I was here last."

"Oh, he's making good with a vengeance. People coming up here all the time."

"Lucky you came up, McHenry. I heard you yelling for him—I thought he'd gone out."

"It is lucky," conceded Pepper. "But—nearly everything's gone, isn't it? I mean in the art line. Nothing left but those things on the wall."

"I wonder if we ought to notify the police?"

"Or the fire department?"

"Or the newspapers," said Pepper softly.

"We'll notify all three," they decided.

So, on Sunday morning, those who read the newspapers learned first that a young artist whose work had recently attracted some attention had been in difficulties with the constabulary, and that from his cell he had sent for assistance, which arrived in the form of a young friend with a thousand dollars in five-dollar gold pieces, which fully convinced the police that Mr. Burgess was innocent. On the next page, those same readers were informed that during the previous evening Mr. Burgess' studio had been completely gutted and that valuable paintings to the value of several thousand dollars had been destroyed. McHenry put italics into his version of the fire, but the Sunday editions didn't print them.

He was, however, able to use them in conversation with the art dealer he saw on Monday morning.

"Here's a list," he said, "of the people Burgess has sold in the last few weeks. Look it over. That's the reason he never sent you more than two samples. And you sold them, didn't you? Well, he has exactly eleven paintings left in the world. That's all there are. And you ought to know that supply and demand have something to do with each other. Yes, I'm his representaive—I'm afraid he's prostrated or sick or something. Now you take these eleven and string 'em up around your place here, and I'll give you a crackajack mailing list to use for 'em. Then you put a good-sized card in your window, with the newspaper clipping on it, and an announcement and see what you draw."

The dealer, who knew good work when he saw it, looked at it.

"This is a long way from the cubists, Mr. McHenry," he said.

"Sure it is. What difference does that make?"

"If Burgess lost his whole establishment he might be willing to let these go at a sacrifice for the sake of some ready money, mightn't he?"

"You're a man of perception," said McHenry.

"What did he want for them?"

"A hundred and fifty to three hundred apiece—the usual selling commission to you."

"I'll give you fifteen hundred for the lot."

"Done, for double the money."

"Nonsense! Burgesses aren't worth that much."

"They haven't been because he's been keeping up with the demand. Now he can't."

"Two thousand is the absolute limit."

"Sold!" said Pepper.

"On your personal guarantee that these are the only ones he has left."

"I'll send you an affidavit," promised McHenry.

In the room which he shared with Pierson Dillingham, McHenry balanced the books of the corporation to a penny.

"It's a darned funny thing," reflected his partner as Pepper came to the final entry, "but that guy's work is no better than it ever was, and look at the way the orders are coming in."

"Sheep, gentle sheep," said McHenry. "Get 'em started and they go on forever. Cubism to use for a drawing card, good stuff sold under cover, get one dealer lined up, make John Wilkins and all the other men we know go in to look at 'em, pull off a private exhibition that gets in the art notes, and you're made."

"How does it come out?"

"I make it this way: We sold six thousand dollars' worth of art, a thousand in rugs, eight hundred in antiques, four monkeys, eleven cats, and about two hundred dollars' worth of odds and ends. Most of the time I never bothered to mention the odds and ends—some of the women that were crazy about the bohemian stuff used to ask me to swipe something characteristic, and then they'd drop ten dollars in the jar. Altogether we took in a trifle over eight thousand. The expenses were two thousand. And the things we didn't sell I thought we'd better give Burgess as a present, because it would look queer if any of the old customers came up and found the place all modernized. That's a thousand that we won't count. So, under the agreement, we divide eight thousand dollars—four apiece. Then Burgess pays us back the two I put up for expenses, and that leaves us six thousand, less what I'll have to make up on the furnishings we give him, and it leaves him the furnishings and two thousand dollars—something like twice as much as he made in the last two years."

"Six thousand for us!"

"Well, really a bit less," confessed McHenry shamefacedly. "I suppose I'll have to own up. You know the newspapers really wouldn't print the stuff I wrote about him as *news*—there was a slight but constant consideration. Then we ought to count the money you used to buy his first two pictures from that dealer. It's really about four thousand for us—for a few months' work on the side."

"What makes me feel best," said Dillingham, smoking rapidly, "is that the poor old boy can really get back to good work and cut out the funny costumes and all the rest of the chicanery. It certainly did hurt him to go through that campaign."

McHenry chuckled.

"The idea of wearing strong glasses was a peach," he admitted. "I can see where that *might* be a stiff one for a man who thought he was an artist—

but it certainly did put the vague, old-mastery touch on, didn't it?"

"Let's go up and tell him," suggested Dillingham. "I suppose he'll weep and fall on our necks. As a matter of fact, Pep, we've just about kept that chap from starving to death. Now I suppose he'll paint cows and chickens and bananas and oranges all the rest of his life."

Together they ascended the stairs and knocked on the door.

"Come in!" said Burgess.

"Gosh, what a smell!" coughed Dillingham. "Phew! What's the trouble, old boy?"

"I'll be darned if he hasn't got the incense burning!" exclaimed McHenry.

The artist, in simple black, with a flowing black tie, came to meet them. He had a palette in one hand and a brush in the other.

"Why, you're not working—at night?"

"It's all right," said Burgess, motioning them in. "Light deadens the color—when you work at night you get a much stronger effect."

"What the mischief!" snapped Dillingham. "What are you doing with those spectacles on?"

"These?" Burgess was rather impatient. "Why, I'm so used to them—here, let that incense alone!"

"It'll choke us to death," complained McHenry.

"That's all right—you got me so used to it I like it."

"Wake up, old horse!" invited Dillingham. "Don't be so chesty. We came in to settle up and bring you some money."

"Sling it in the jar on the table," said Burgess impatiently. "I can't bother——" Peering through the powerful lenses, he dabbed here and there with his brush. McHenry, ten feet away, saw only a tremendous blur.

"What in thunder is that?" he asked.

"This?" Burgess made another dab and backed away to get the effect. "This is the best thing I've ever done—it's a heavy fog——"

"Where?"

"Oh, anywhere. Just a fog."

"For the love of Mike!" said McHenry. "You don't mean to say you've *fallen* for it!"

"Look here!" said Burgess loftily. "Please don't criticize what you don't know anything about. This"—he took a large daub of paint from his palette, and smeared it around with his thumb—"this—you poor simp—is *art!*"

Holworthy Hall's next story is about a real-estate deal. It is called "All on the Ground Floor." Read it in the POPULAR, out two weeks from to-day, July 7.

MEANING NO OFFENSE

WHEN William A. Rodenberg, of Illinois, was reëlected to Congress last fall, after having been superseded for one term by a Democrat, he received this letter from a personal friend of his in East St. Louis:

MY DEAR RODY: While you know that I am a great friend of yours, I have been saying pretty freely in East St. Louis that I deplore your recent election. This is because I don't think any Republican knows how to run this government.

I hope this will make no difference in our warm personal feeling for each other.

The congressman sent back this appropriate reply:

MY DEAR FRIEND: The next time I see you, I shall hand you a stiff punch to the jaw.

I hope this will make no difference in our warm personal feeling for each other. Cordially yours,

WILLIAM A. RODENBERG.

Five Cents Change

By Frederick Niven

Author of "Hands Up," Etc.

A problem in sun *versus* ice. A story of the hot spots of the planet, with an Indian as the central figure. You will appreciate the concluding sentence: "You can't pay a good man for friendship."

THE high indigo rocks had a merciless sheen, and the sky, seeming more tremendous and far off than ever, had a shimmering, silky aspect, graduated in its blue tones like the polished inner shells of mussels. It was the hottest summer in the records of the white man. As for the Indians, Old Rheumatism—as these whites called a certain antique red man of the remote section—knew already what he would have to add to the "winter count" this year. He kept that winter count sedulously hid in these days of prying patronage, even shook his head and did not "savvy" when any one asked if such a thing still existed. But it did exist still, and he knew, as the drought increased, that he would have to add to the old record a drawing to the effect that in this summer the white wedges of ice and snow on the summits dwindled and dwindled until they were no more visible from below.

On the average summer they dwindled "some," but this year you could almost see them in the act of disappearing. They shrank, narrowed, departed, and the blue ridges turned into unrelieved indigo. The long, yellow belts of the lower benches seemed to dance. Most years they merely showed through a skimmer; there was no optical illusion; on the warmest summer the effect was clear enough merely of haze between them and us. But this summer the effect was as if the benches quivered in themselves. They were like painted backgrounds in a wild-West show seen back East when a wind blows across the arena. But there was no wind here for days, and even the quivering of the yellow benches could not make one imagine a wind.

The lake, too, was shrunken beyond knowledge of living man, red and white. It was now no longer like a great mirror for the sky and the hills. Instead, it was as a splinter of glass, blue glass, and even that suffered a daily attenuation. A pumping plant was in process of extension out to all that was left of the lake; but the people of the section told each other, in dry jest, that "she" —meaning, of course, the lake—shrank so speedily that the gang would never get up with her. She would always get ahead of them—and they were indeed liable to drink her up themselves, to judge by the way that the two water boys kept carrying pailfuls to them to keep them cool; or—this more seriously—if they did gain upon her, and eventually thrust in their great pump nozzles, she would be so low that they would pump sand and water, instead of plain water, and so choke the pipes.

Down at the railway town it was not so bad, though even there they had to import water in tank cars, the local funds of water being at low ebb. It

was in the midst of this excessive and memorable weather, that Smart, the storekeeper at Sandy Bluff, fell ill.

Illness is hard to understand up there. They just won't get ill—that is the idea. And it works there better than it does in cities. The friendliness of the inhabitants toward the open air helps the bluff—makes it a deal, after all. A man may put an ax into his foot occasionally, thanks to a knotty log and a distracted attention; a man may have a rib put out of place, thanks to a vicious mount and a distracted attention. But illness! A man is generally very bad before he admits it.

Not in three years had there been illness that could be called by the name. Then it was the hotel proprietor who was bowled over; and he hushed the whole section in awe before the possible tragedies in wait for mortal man. Three years ago he had, of all illnesses to take a man, cystitis—in the fall—and he took it well. Finding he had to yell with the pain, he went up to a lonely shack a mile back in the hills, with plenty of fuel, and kept warm there. His notion was that no man must hear him yell. The "doc" put up at the hotel for a week, during the worst of that malady, and he declared that he could distinguish Smith's voice among the coyotes during the nights.

Nobody had been ill since then. They had refused to be ill more wholeheartedly than ever, for Smith's convalescence was as woeful as his illness. He had—I must whisper this—*to keep his feet dry.*

"What!" he growled, when Doc Stetson told him that. "What! Keep my feet dry! Why, sir, we've got a saying out West—'A man that's scared o' wet feet!' That's what we say!" So he had let his feet get wet, and back he went to bed, and shouted again for two or three nights.

It would take a long time to forget that illness. If the white men had kept a "winter count," that fall would have gone down as the one in which Smith was told not to get his feet wet. It was, indeed, recalled now, in this dry summer. But here was another kind of illness—an illness full of tossings and turnings and of a voice little better than a whisper, a queer, eerie whisper, babbling incoherencies to the oppressive night—hardly less oppressive than the day. For, if a wind came at all after dark, it was surely hot. How could it be otherwise, with no snow left in the mountains to cool it in its journey? Smart had a full voice in days of health, and this thin babble was terrible to hear by contrast.

The heat held. There were fires in the mountains. The fire wardens had their work cut out—no more sitting around at ease, with no worry in the world save an occasional wonder if they would lose their jobs; listening, satisfied, and smiling, to the murmur of the rain, as they did the year before last. This year of Smart's illness was a terror. The fire wardens were up and down throughout the land, fighting flame, each calling out the neighbor warden, only to find him with a fire of his own—then each calling out the country. Up in the Pinto Range the wild creatures ran into Elk City and cowered in the main street, taking shelter there among men for dread of the devouring flames in the hills—chipmunks, squirrels, badger, deer, bear, even—until the city itself took fire. Heavy smoke hung high in the air over the mountains by day; and by night weird radiances smote up on the sky—here, there, yonder.

And all the while, at Sandy Bluff, in his bedroom, Smart lay tossing and raving. The little missionary came up as well as the doctor, kept the store open—or sort of half open—and gave Smart his medicine at the times marked on the bottle, when Mrs. Smart was forced to sleep. Mrs. Smart bore up

well, but her eyes were full of pain. As the smoke clouds hung over us, there hung over us, also, the knowledge that a man would be ill unto death in weather whose only fault was that it had overdone being "good weather."

One evening Doc Stetson came out into the store, that the missionary was running to the best of his ability, and shook his head.

"I'll stay here to-night," he said. "When you fellows do get ill up here, you get it badly."

Those who had come in for the last bulletins looked solemn. They were Smith, the hotel proprietor—he of the wet-feet year—Jules, fruit man; Schwelpheimer, blacksmith; Anderson, boss of the road gang. Their glances meant: "It's as bad as that, eh?"

The doc nodded in response to their looks.

"I would give a lot of money for some"—he paused—"ice!"

"Yes, it's hot for a man with fever," said Jules, taking the remark at first merely for a comment on the heat. Then he furrowed his brows and considered. "Ice!" he broke out. "Ice!"

"Yap. I would pack him in it if I had some—if I had enough." The doc touched his neck. "A chunk of it laid there would help if I couldn't get any more. But I can't get it, that's all."

An old Indian woman, who had just made a purchase before Stetson's arrival, remained staring with big, black eyes, taking in the doc's words. Now she glided out baggily, and all looked after her, as if she mattered, as if she was vital to the question; but they looked like that just because she had moved, and they were up against it. That was all.

There was a gentle sound, without, of a horse hoofing listlessly in the sand, more by habit than because of spirit to-night, as the old woman tied her sack of flour to the saddle. Then came the gentle flip-flap as she rode away.

"Would it be any use," asked Jules, "going up to the mountains? Snow's snow—and melts away. But there is still Bill Williams' glacier, and a glacier's a glacier. It would take time to go that far, but——"

The others looked sideways at him. They were doubtful of how ice could be packed so far.

"Two days to get there," he went on.

"The ice would melt coming back. You couldn't pack her," said the doctor.

But down at the reserve the old woman was talking, telling of what she had heard at Smart's store. Down there they knew all the gossip of the white folks, knew some through hearing it, knew more through seeing, not in a "rubbernecking" way, but just by plain seeing—observation. And soon, away down the wagon road to the railroad town there was the muffled, quick step of hoofs in sand, the rhythmic rub of saddle leather. A messenger was off to do what he could for Smart, the storekeeper. For there was reason for thinking of Smart, for wishing to do what could be done for him.

It was a lonely world through which the Indian rode. The wild things had emigrated. A census return of them would have left rattlesnakes easily first. The eaters of grass and leaves, departing, had caused the eaters of those who eat grass and leaves to depart, also. The rattlesnakes only remained to eat, perhaps, the few last grasshoppers.

Away down the dry road went the shadowy horse and rider at the lope a man takes who has a long way to go. Later he would be followed by a young man on horseback, with a led horse; and, later still, by another man and another led horse, these to await his return with the fresh mounts for him, or mounts at least fresher than his would be. He would have need of them in his task, if it succeeded. And succeed it did—at least in the first

stage; and in big enterprises that is a thing to be thankful for, though not to whoop over.

Early in the morning, into Jerkwater, the railroad "town," came the Indian; and the operator, who was also station agent, had a faint interest in him; for even white folk, even hot and weary operators, have their eyes for gossip, as well as ears. He was bored stiff with the heat, and with his monotonous job of remembering whether a gravel train, working in the vicinity, was on the main line or on the spur. Keeping track on that gravel trail worried him like heat spots. Once, already, he had fallen asleep, and had been forced to hold up the main-line train because he had, during slumber, lost track of that gravel string. It was good that he did hold up the main-line train, for the gravel string was not on the spur. That had been a lesson to him, and he had managed to keep awake ever since. But when he saw a whirl of dust in the middle of the wavering heat haze, that hung along the world as the haze hangs over a lamp, he peered and wondered. Here was one who ignored the heat—a horseman, in haste. On the instant that the Indian dismounted and threw wide the reins, the horse drooped neck, sagged legs; but then these cayuses always do that. It might not be half dead, despite the bellowslike rise and fall of its lean sides. Yet, as the swarthy, and dusty, rider walked to the platform, the horse raised its head, and sniffed in the direction of the siding. There stood the tank cars, and the operator surmised that the Indian—whatever the cause of his hurry—was about to ask the loan of a bucket of water for his horse. It was evidently not so.

"You catchum ice?" asked the Indian, coming straight to the point.

"Ice!" groaned the operator. And again: "Ice!" Then he chuckled very feebly. "Say, this is the kind of josh you want to work off later on, on the boss in the nether regions. Guess you're practicing."

"You know Doc Stetson?"

"Sure!" rather dazed.

"He say catchum ice for Smart to put against him head—maybe Smart live."

"Oho!" The operator was immediately all attention. "Smart, the storekeeper, sick?"

The Indian nodded. He thought he had already said as much.

Suddenly the operator broke out: "Say! How you going to pack the ice if you catchum?"

"Oh, I ride good, you bet."

The operator's mind woke from its lethargy, and had a plan; but he was doubtful. He scratched the back of his head, tilting his hat, in the action, over his sun-tired eyes.

"It's a problem in arithmetic," he considered. "Given a block of ice as large as you can pack, how much of it will be left when you get into Sandy again?"

"Him melt some," agreed the Indian. "Iridelikellyoubet."

"On *that?* How long do you reckon?"

"Some fellow wait for me along there," and the dusty Indian held up a finger, "one hoss, you bet; some fellow wait for me again, another hoss, you bet. You catchum ice. Passenger train packum ice. I know, you bet."

The operator picked up a bucket and shoved it at the Indian.

"Help yourself to water in that tank," he said. "It belongs to the railway company now, but I guess it belonged to God before that, and your cayuse worries me."

The Indian caught the pail, and the operator dived into his office for the regulation red flag. A freight train was coming along. He had already passed her from Williams Bluff. The gravel

string was sizzling on the siding; the gang rested on the shady side, grateful for the delay. He came out with his flag and ambled up the line a little way to meet the train that now could be heard hooting for curves, away off in the rock cuttings. The ties gave off occasional, faint cracking sounds, audible in the quiet there, as the sun beat into them. Looking down upon them, as they now sang faintly with the approaching train, the operator considered that if a man touched them he would peel the skin off his finger doing so.

Here came the freight round the bend, and the operator gave the signal for it to halt at the little depot. Hotly the locomotive rocked to a standstill, casting an odor of warm oil on the air, adding to the heat until it was nigh overpowering.

"Wonder how you can stay with your job," the operator hailed the engineer as the locomotive passed with brakes on. And the engineer, leaning from the cab, replied: "It ain't pleasant when we're standing still. What are you holding us up for? We want to make a breeze for ourselves——" The rest was lost as the engine slid on, and the long string went grinding past, speed decreasing—flat cars, grain cars, empty cattle cars.

The operator gazed at them thus passing in review before him, and wondered if he had held the train up in vain. No! There was a refrigerator car. The string went bump-bump-bump, and came to a standstill; the train crew hung from the caboose, or sat on the roof for coolness; the conductor dropped off, jacketless, shirt sleeves held up with elastic bands, hat on back of head, handkerchief in hand, ready to mop when the heat should take full effect after the cessation of the wind eddies caused by the train. He had been held up on that sidetrack last trip to let a passenger go through, and he hoped the maneuver was not to be repeated this time, for such holding up was not in his regular schedule. He felt an animosity to the passenger train, even before hearing the cause of his delay, and took it for granted she had lost time again for some reason.

"Got any ice?" asked the operator.

The conductor glared. He was a martinet of a man, and the extreme seriousness of the operator's tones told him that this was not just a preliminary greeting; this was the serious and deliberate reason for the flagging of his train. He frowned heavily. He thought this operator must be effete, and yet with some gall in his effeteness, to hold up the—nominal at least—fast freight, to ask for ice. The sun must have touched the fellow! Besides, he was worried over ice these days. Precious time was spent seeing that ice was dumped into refrigerator-car ice safes, and ice didn't last long, either. Poof!

"There's somebody ill, and the doctor says if he can get ice for him he'll pull through," explained the operator.

"Look here," growled the conductor, not for one moment believing the story, "I've got a schedule to run to. I've got to explain if I don't run to it. Where is this sick person? I guess everybody wants ice. I guess you'll want a heap of ice later. Better get in training." And he made as if to give the signal to go ahead.

That jest was antiquated to the operator; he had said something of the same kind himself quite recently.

"And you call yourself an American!" he jerked out.

The conductor glared again. But the operator had got up energy at last, despite the heat, and he pointed to the Indian.

"That fellow," he said, "has ridden down from Sandy for ice—all the way—and you go and turn down——"

"It ain't for you, then?"

"Me? Was that your idea? No, siree. It's for a poor"—he paused—"woman!" he ejaculated.

That did it.

"See boys, shake a leg!" cried the conductor. "Get out the ice hooks!" And he, in person, laid hold of a side ladder, and up he went on to the refrigerator-car roof, where quickly he was joined by the crew. Up came the lid, and soon they were wrestling with the desired ice. A sound of trickling water beneath announced the ceaseless melting of the precious store.

"Ice!" said the conductor, wrists on hips, up on the roof, bossing the operation. "I'm tired of the name these here days; but I'm an American, and if there's a woman sick, and the doctor says——"

But the operator paid no heed to his grandiloquence.

"Yes, that's what. You're all right at bottom," he agreed, lending a hand below. And there, on the platform, he and the Indian lowered the precious block.

Bang! Down went the ice-safe lid. The delighted operator gave the high ball to conductor and crew. The engineer, wondering, ahead, took his signal from the conductor on the roof; the bell clanged; she started. There came the tug-tug-tug the length of the string, the bump-bump, and muffled sounds from the refrigerator car of the ice—disturbed ice—as the blocks within clashed into new formation again. Then away went the train, the crew on the caboose roof, the conductor leaning over the chain behind, letting the eddies of wind, beginning again, fan him.

Together the two men, left on the platform, thrust the ice into a gunny sack; together they tied it securely to the saddle of the watered and grateful cayuse.

"I told him it was for a woman," said the operator, as he helped at this task.

Let no man say the Indian has no humor. This Indian shrugged, and, with a faint smile, said he: "Smart got wife. I guess him wife heap sorry if Smart pass in his checks—you bet. Oh, yes!"

The operator nodded, appreciating this explanation of his remark to the conductor.

"That's what!" he said. "Well, I hope you make it out all right." And to himself he soliloquized, as the Indian mounted and wheeled away: "This sun-versus-ice problem is too stiff an arithmetical problem for me. I guess it's more than arithmetic; it would need a professor of sums from Harvard, and a weather professor from an observatory to thrash her out in figures. I hope, for Smart's sake—and Mrs. Smart's—that this Indian gets a plus and not a minus answer to it by the time he reaches Sandy."

Up at Sandy Bluff that day the inhabitants had, ever and again, raised their eyes unto the hills—the too distant hills, glaring indigo, terrible indigo, amazing, unforgetable, and, it seemed to them then, cruel. Here was a man who might live if ice could be laid about his head; and ice there was none. And away up north, on this same continent, if not at this moment, to be sure, in another couple of months, men would be dying because of a frozen world.

The fire warden of the section, tarrying a night to rest at Sandy Bluff, told of mad deer over on the Williams Range—either from a recent fire, or from heat. At any rate, they were charging to and fro, not because they had scented him, but charging to and fro meaninglessly. He asked after Smart, knowing the storekeeper was ill. They told him of the doctor's doubt of the patient.

"He's doing his best," said Smith.

"But he says if he could get some ice —and pack him in it——"

The fire warden, aware of the hardness of the world as well as of its great kindness, merely said quickly:

"A bit of fire in the winter, and a bit of ice in the summer are mighty handy things—but there you are. I guess folk has got to make out." But it was spoken philosophically, not unfeelingly.

"Doc says to-night will decide," said Smith. "He's just gone over to have another look at him."

"What's the matter with going across and hearing if there's any good news?" asked the fire warden.

They rose and moved over to the store, and as they did so a horseman surged past them. The horse came to a standstill at Smart's; the rider dropped off, and they saw him wrestle with something on the saddle. They could see plainly, in the light sprayed out from the door, hands moving speedily, taking something from the cantle. Then the man passed up the two steps and disappeared into the store, ahead of them.

They followed, aware of something meaningful afoot. Within was the doctor, talking seriously to the missionary who had stayed pat with the proposition, half his time in the store, half his time relieving Mrs. Smart at the fevered man's bedside. Every one noticed that the Indian was carrying a gunny sack; it was dripping wet, and all lumped up in his hands. He thrust it at Stetson without a word.

"Huh!" cried the doctor at the impact. "It's cold as ice."

"Yes, ice, you bet," said the Indian, and, as he pressed his hands on the soaking sack, there was evidence of some substance still within. Behind him, to the door, was a little trail of water drops. If the Jerkwater operator had been there he would have seen, without calculation, how much, or how little, was left of the original hefty block. But the answer to the problem was, at any rate, not a minus, but a plus.

The doctor stared as if a miracle had happened, but asked no questions. It was ice, and no mistake, and every aid was of value at this critical time. He departed with it in haste, and the Indian walked over, leaning against the counter, to stare before him vacantly at the shelves with their rows of tinned goods. Then he looked on the floor, and his eyes stolidly followed the trail of water drops to the door. The missionary approached him and held forth his hand. The two men shook hands.

"Where did you get it?" asked the missionary.

"Jerkwater. I ride down last night. Some fellow wait for me with fresh horses for 'way back. That's all right, you bet. Smart good man. Some storekeeper say to me when I say 'How much?' 'Five dollah!' and when I say 'No good,' they say 'four dollah!' and when I say 'No good!' they say 'three dollah!' Maybe I trade, and some other fellow tell me: 'You fool! I buy same thing one day for dollah and six bits.' Smart," he smiled his faint smile, "Smart white man. Smart say to me one day: 'Got no change. I owe you five cent.' Next time he see me he stopped me. 'Hello,' he say; 'I think you the fellow I owe five cent.' I got ice for Smart to stop heat, you bet. I hope Smart live."

And he did. It would have been too bad, after that, if Smart had not pulled through. But he knew the Indian of that kind too well to offer to pay him for the ride or the ice, for you can't pay a good man for friendship.

Look for "The Queer Place," a creepy story of the West, by Niven, in a later issue of the POPULAR.

Chiroptera Insectivora for Luck

By Wilbur Hall

Author of "To Cancel Half a Line," Etc.

Chronicling the search for a black bat, strongly recommended for its luck-bringing propensities. The winning of an automobile race depended upon the successful quest for a specimen of the *chiroptera insectivora*

IT was Archie Brininstool called the bat "chiroptera insectivora," and it was a letter from "Duke" Reichenbach's father that started us looking for one. But what I want to find out is whether it was the bat that brought the Duke his change of luck in the San Diego road race. There's a good deal to be said on both sides.

This much is sure: before the bat's time, Reichenbach's old Persis No. 16 had only finished once in nine starts in the big automobile classics, and that once had been beaten to fifth money by twenty seconds after a three-hundred-and-one-mile event; since we signed the bat we've been somewhere in the purse every time we've started. Right off the reel you'd say the mascot was worth all he cost, wouldn't you? Well, I can only tell you how it was.

The whole thing happened when the Duke was teamed with Jerry Slocum and they were driving the Persis 16 and the Persis 11. I should say that Reichenbach was having enough trouble then without carrying a whole tool boxful of jinxes, because Jerry Slocum was off on him and spent most of his time thinking up plans to give the Duke something to worry about. It wasn't any of my party, because I'm only a pit mechanic attached to the team, but if it had been me instead of Reichenbach —— I'm not fond of Jerry Slocum.

Reichenbach wasn't a duke, of course —they just called him that. He came from a family that had been in the show business for a couple of generations, and his father, who wrote the letter about the bat, had been the greatest flying-ring man of his day. That accounts for him being superstitious, because all those stage acrobats believe in charms and luck signs. Just after Reichenbach had lost a wheel and wrecked one car in the Phoenix race and had burned up the Persis 16 at Corona in November, this letter came, and the Duke showed it to me. It was in a kind of scrambled typewriting, which the Duke said was from the old gentleman having a typewriter some one had given him that didn't track very well. I would have judged that was only one of its troubles, because the letter looked about like this, as I remember it:

De troit| nov. 20th.

Dear son Charlls%

Inote in the papers t hat you have been xxxxxxxhaving bad luck lately & I write to say why don8t you ge t a black bat* They always have brought everybody good luck that I ever heard of.

Xour motheris hoping that you can get home or chrismas an so are all of us, but I g-⅛uess that xxxxx wont probaly be .

Get a masbot lie I tell you and pull xxxx out of this stre-streak of hard luck because all of us p@r professionall people know what hardluvk is and we always breaka streak with a new mmascot.

So here8s hoping you win the Sandiego &

beat Earl CCooper and win a hat⅛ful of money is thewish of

Yourfa ther|

Charles F. Reichenbach|sr?

I wasn't very much on this luck stuff myself, but I said to the Duke: "You can try anything once, of course."

He looked at the letter again. "There's one thing certain, Eddie," he said, "and that is that my luck couldn't be any worse. I've been thinking that I'd try the old gentleman's hunch. But that's what I came to you for—how am I going to get a bat? Do you know anything about them?"

I said: "Duke, I'll give it to you straight—I went on one once, but I never heard of that kind bringing anybody anything but bad luck and a headache. When it comes to a black bat for a mascot you can search me."

The Duke laughed. "Well, let's go downtown and see what we can do," he said, and so I skinned off my overalls and washed up, and we went to a bird store that I had seen one day. On the way we got to talking about Reichenbach's luck, and then we drifted to Jerry Slocum, and I told the Duke that if Jerry ever tried the low-life tricks on me that he had on him I'd take a jack and beat Slocum to death with it. It was then Reichenbach told me something about it. He was in a peculiar position, it seems. He said he had been recommended to the Persis people by a man from Grand Rapids that owned stock in the Persis factory, and this man had gone pretty strong, the Duke said, to get him the place.

"It's up to me to make good," he told me, "because Mr. Milsap is fighting a lot of other factory officials and directors and so on to hold me. And what makes matters worse for me is that Jerry Slocum is supposed to be engaged to the daughter of the factory manager, who is a stockholder, too, and——"

"Don't say another word," I interrupted then. "I take back what I said about caving Slocum in with a jack. Don't do it—let him live and suffer. If he's going to marry a rich girl, he'll be so miserable when she gets at him that having his head operated on with a broken piece of rear axle would be perfect happiness in comparison. Come on, forget Jerry Slocum and let's locate this bat thing."

I thought sure this bird store would be the proper place, and the Duke did, too, but we were wrong. A kind of dog-faced man crawled out from behind a chicken coop full of guinea pigs when we went in, and asked us what we wanted. The Duke said he wanted to get a black bat.

"A how?" the fellow said.

"A black bat—doesn't that sound simple?"

"No," the fellow said, turning his back on us and beginning to feed lettuce to a cageful of birds; "no, it sounds foolish."

So I said: "Look here, friend, we don't mean what you mean—I thought we did myself for a while, until Mr. Reichenbach explained it. What we want is a bat for a mascot. Don't you keep bats?"

Then this birdman began to get sore. "No, I don't!" he said, and he talked like a racing car going downhill with the brakes slipping. "I don't keep bats nor kangaroos nor spoonbill ducks, nor mattresses nor coffins nor horsehair chains nor watch springs nor ladies' shoes, either, and I don't know anything about bats, and I don't want to, and don't you guys come in here and get fresh with me, because I'm busy; and you probably think you're funny—oh, well, you are—about as funny as a hearse; and this is a bird store, and if you want anything, say so; but if not, good day, and anyhow a bat isn't a bird, it's a——" Well, just then the brakes caught and he stopped in his own length.

"It's a what?" the Duke said.

"I don't know," the birdman said; "but it isn't a bird. *Good night!*"

I told the Duke I thought we better be going, and he said all right, because it didn't look very promising there.

The Duke wanted to know where we would go, so I asked a policeman, but he said darned if he knew, and so I went into a drug store and asked the man if he had any idea where a man could get a bat for a mascot. He started to laugh, and then he turned it into a sneeze; and when he got that off his chest he said: "The only thing I know of for what you have is black coffee or a few drops of aromatic spirits of ammonia."

You see, the trouble was that none of these fellows would take us seriously. We had quite a time, but finally we ran across a man who said he used to work for a taxidermist, and he said the first fellow we had seen had been right—a bat wasn't a bird. He went on to say that he thought it was a fish—a kind of flying fish that lives in caves near the ocean. That sounded reasonable, because I remembered that when I was a kid we used to have bats in the caves down at La Jolla and Newport Beach; so we went to a fish store and asked the man if he had ever heard of a bat.

He looked us over, and then he said: "Sure! Why do you ask me?"

So I told him we wanted one for Reichenbach to use as a mascot. That fishman seemed to have an occasional glimmer of sense, and he knew Reichenbach right away, because he was a race fan in a way himself, and he wanted to help us. But he started off wrong at that.

"I get you," he said. "I never heard of using one for that, but it might be all right. What you want is one of the bats that was used this season to knock a home run with, or that broke up a game with Portland——"

So I saw he wasn't going to get anywhere, and I said: "No, we want a bat that lives in caves and hangs up all day like a Pullman berth, and flies around at night."

"Oh," he said, "I have you now. What you want is a bat bat—a regular bat, eh?"

The Duke said: "There you have it—a bat bat. B-a-t—bat! Just like that."

The fishman thought a while, and finally he had to give it up. But he asked us why we didn't telephone the university out at the south end of town and ask some of the professors. That was the best hunch yet. We did it, and after they'd switched us to every teacher on the place and tried the janitor and the football coach for luck, somebody stumbled in on the wire and said:

"This is Professor Ulrey. If you are really desirous of securing a specimen of the chiroptera insectivora, I will be very glad to have one of my students in the biological department assist you."

I was talking, so I said: "No, professor, you've got us wrong. What we want is a bat—just a plain bat—to use for a mascot—for good luck, you understand."

He said: "Of course, the fatuous superstition that chance or fortune may be swayed by one's possession of any particular mammalia or of such a grotesque absurdity as the rear left foot of the lepus sylvaticus——"

I thought that he might really get going in a minute, so I cut in right there. "Wait a shake, professor!" I said. "You mean that a fellow can't change his luck by walking under a ladder or holding a cat up by the tail, don't you? Yes. Well, we're willing to take a chance on that. All we're asking you to do is to help us find a plain, ordinary family bat—one that the people are through with and would like to give to a man that would treat it kindly. If you can do that much for us, we'll not hold you responsible if it doesn't work as a charm."

He was a nice old man. He said that if we would come out to the schoolhouse he would introduce us to one of his students, and we hung up the phone and thanked the fishman and went.

The professor wished us on a thoughtful, sad-looking boy named Archibald Brininstool, and Archie put on a pair of oversize spectacles and took us up on the spot. "What you gentlemen desire to obtain," he said, after we had just got through telling him in words of one syllable, "is a living specimen of the family chiroptera. Very good. Those that abound in this region are all insectivoræ——"

"Yes," I said, "so we understand. Now here is a dollar. Will you lead us to the animal and loan us a chain or a bird cage or whatever it is we need, and let us get away, because the San Diego race starts January 9th, and we've got quite a little to do before that."

That boy Archie wanted to give us a lecture, you could see that; but I finally made him understand that we desired to obtain our living specimen of the family chiroptera and all the rest of it as soon as we could and then to beat it. He acted a good deal disappointed, but said he would get us one that night and bring it to us the next day, and he took the address of the garage. The Duke had gone back to the machine to wait, because he was laughing a good deal and he was afraid he might spoil the play; so I stopped, then, long enough to tell Archie who the Duke was. I thought if he knew it was a great race driver he was batting around for it might speed him up a little. But not. Archie!

"Duke Reichenbach," he said, with a sort of puzzled air. "I'm not acquainted with him. Is he connected, by any chance, with the Smithsonian Institution?"

I said no, that he was connected with the Persis factory racing team just at present, but that if he heard much more about bats without getting one it probably wouldn't be long before he'd be connected with the institution for the feeble-minded. Archie didn't take that one at all. I've always felt that Archie was a serious-minded youth, but I may be wrong.

Anyway, he delivered the goods, which is all that counts in this world. He came in with it next morning in a box, and we took a peek at it. Personally I didn't care about it myself, and neither did the Duke. He said:

"Ugh! Take it away and disinfect it before you bring it here, young fellow."

But I wasn't going to let that bat get away after all the trouble we'd been to. I said that I'd take care of it, and the Duke sniffed again and went out into the garage. I heard him start up the old Persis engine, and, when I looked, he was standing near the exhaust, letting the castor-oil smoke from the cylinders blow over him.

I said to Archie: "See here, worthy youth, would you mind answering a few questions yes and no for me?" I was afraid of that lecture habit of Archie's. He said that I might proceed, and that he would endeavor to meet my inquiries as well as he could. "Of course," he said, "if you propose to propound questions regarding the classification, habits, habitat, and peculiarities of the chiroptera insect——"

"Very little, if any," I interrupted. "I only want to know what a bat is. It's a bird, of course?"

"Certainly not!" he said promptly. "It is a mammalia of the——"

"One at a time!" I said. "One at a time! It's not a bird. Is it a fish?"

"It is not. The density of your ignorance——"

"Oh, all of that!" I said. "Just close your muffler for a minute. Is it an animal?"

"Yes, genus——"

"It's an animal. It looks like a bird to me. You're sure you're right?"

"Absolutely. If you would only afford me an opportunity to elucidate! The chiropteræ—bats—are mammals; volant mammals, the fore limbs of which are modified for flight. There has never been any doubt on that point. It is true that Linnæus and some of his school maintained that the chiroptera were primates, mainly on account of the number of the upper incisors, but Huxley points out that the discoid deciduate placenta is equally present in and characteristic of——"

"That settles it for me," I said. "I'm convinced. I'm for Huxley. Now the next question is, what do I feed it?"

"It requires comparatively little nourishment at this time of the year," Archibald replied. "Being partially a hibernating mammal, the chiroptera——"

"Coming down to cases, does it eat nuts or hamburger steak?"

"Insects!" Archie snapped. I think he thought I was kidding him.

"That's all I wanted to know," I said. "Bees and flies and shrimps and—and—and——"

"Certainly not shrimps," Archie corrected. "But all of the smaller winged insects, including the common coleopterous insects which are very numerous in——"

Right there I had an idea. "Here, Archie!" I said. "Here is a five-dollar bill. You take it, like a good old scout, and get our bat friend room and board at the best battery you know of around here, and if you have to get a suite, or a room with bath—as I should judge from what I've seen of him that you would—why, you call on me for more. That will be a lot better than for me to get a butterfly net and run around nights looking for coleopterrible insects when I ought to be asleep. We only want the bat for a mascot—not to clean the carburetor with or to use as a watch charm—so it won't be necessary to keep him chained up here. You take him—or she, whatever it is—and run along, and the day before the race we'll have somebody look you up and bring Friend Bat along to San Diego, because the Duke wants him in the pits on the day of the race."

I'm afraid Archie didn't understand me any better than I understood him, but we got together finally, and he went away with the box under his arm and ten of my good dollars in his jeans. I had had about enough bats for the time being, and there was a lot to do yet on the Persis before she was right. So I climbed into my overalls and started on the transmission as quick as I could. It was easier than listening to Archie.

II.

This San Diego race was a ten-thousand-dollar event on the crookedest, meanest course in the world, with at least eighteen entries booked. It came at the end of a hard season, and a good many of the drivers entered were willing to take long chances with their poor old wrecks to win a few dollars so they could start the new year with part of their bills paid. I wouldn't have driven that Point Loma six-mile circuit in a touring car myself, but Jerry Slocum and Duke Reichenbach had to go in to keep the Persis team on the map. Jerry didn't care so much, but the Duke was staking everything on the race.

Two or three drivers working in a team, if they pull together all right, can go a long ways, win a lot of money, and do their factory and their car some good; but when drivers on a team don't hit it off it's like an unhappy married couple—the closer they are together, the farther they get apart. Jerry Slocum was a big husky who had graduated from the factory. He was one of the kind that thinks it's being gay and lively to squirt a siphon of seltzer down a man's back or pour water in his gas tank

or get drunk and sit up all night wrecking a hotel lobby. I was off on that fellow from the first time I saw him—he and I couldn't be any better friends than a red bandanna and a bull with a sore head. Fritz Weid, the Duke's mechanician, felt the same, and if we had had our way the Duke would have cut away from that Persis outfit in a minute before he'd have teamed with such a low lifer.

The only trouble with that was that it would have pleased Slocum himself clear to the ground. He had a friend in Indianapolis—a third-class driver who had once won seventh money in some endurance run at a county fair—that he was trying to get on the team in Duke Reichenbach's place. His play all the time was to make the factory think the Duke couldn't drive, and between him and bad luck he pretty near succeeded. Fritz Weid and I had it doped out that about one more start without getting into the money would end Reichenbach. And as it was an off year and he hadn't saved enough to buy himself a good car, we saw where he would be out on the bread line about the day after the San Diego unless he could crowd into the prize money some way.

Slocum always played tag with the biggest fellows in the racing game, and most of them seemed to get along with him all right, although it must have been because he spent his money and mixed, and not because he was such a beautiful character. They all knew that he would do a little trick on a course on the low down if he could gain anything by it, and occasionally there would be a plant made before a race to beat a man the rest didn't like or were afraid of. There isn't much of that sort of thing in the automobile-racing game, as far as I have ever seen, but if there was anything you could count on Slocum being in on it somewhere. He was a pretty fair pilot when things went all right, but a bonehead if he was caught in a tight place or if he happened to be squeezed hard early in a race. That was the difference between him and one of the real speed kings—he had to have the race running right for him or he laid down. To tell the truth, I can't see where he had any class.

I was a little afraid of this San Diego with Slocum hanging so close to three or four of the drivers that I knew might arrange a job; and I wasn't surprised, one night, two weeks before the race, when Fritz Weid came in with a story he'd heard at McKee's. He'd been eating supper there with his wife, and right around a corner from their table was a party of four drivers—one of them Jerry Slocum. One of the crowd said he and his teammate were going out for a no-stop record, and they were all trying to figure how they could slow the race down and make this stunt easy. They had decided that Duke Reichenbach was the one man who'd be dangerous, because they knew he'd set a hot pace. If he did that, the others would have to keep up, and that would make it difficult to run the whole three hundred and five miles without a stop. You can see how that was. And the plan was to slow the Duke down at every turn of the road.

Fritz and I talked it over, and then we went and got Duke Reichenbach out of bed and spun him the yarn. We wanted him to go before the A. A. A. officials and the race committee and spoil this little game, but he said no.

"It wouldn't get us anywhere," he said. "There's only Fritz's word for it, and it would kick up a row at the factory. The way to spoil that party is to drive out from under them and leave them back in the smoke entertaining each other."

"Then the best thing we can do is to make that old Persis do better than she can," I said, and the Duke nodded.

"Go as far as you like," he said, and handed me a little kidding about what

a great mechanic I was and how the race was up to me.

Well, there was some truth in that, too. I should have to tell you some day about how a shop mechanic lost a great classic and a mechanician won it. Fritz and I decided we'd make the Persis race proof, and what we had already done to her wasn't a remark to what we started in to do the next morning. It was the Duke who had the race to drive—but we were going to give him some motor to drive it with.

A good many race fans will remember the car—the old Persis 16. She was old enough to vote then, but the factory people weren't disagreeable about parts, and Fritz and I knew her inside and out. When we got through with our part of the job, she was as nearly new as we could make her—the only thing she had that had come from the factory, just about, was thirteen coats of paint and the seat cushions. If the jinx that had been on her all season would only lay off a few days, the Duke would make no-stop records at San Diego hard to get.

I had almost forgotten about the bat all this time, because I had never had much faith in that chiroptera insectivora myself. But just then the story leaked out—Branaman and the other boys wrote pieces about it in their papers—and everybody began to kid the Duke about his pet bat. He pretended to take Mister Bat very seriously, and when they laughed at him he came right back and said they'd better save some of their laughs for after the race, because that bat was going to put No. 16's hoodoo on the rocks. This gave the automobile editors another chance, and they printed pictures of the bat and of Archie feeding it flies and angleworms and so on, and Al Waddell said in the *Pink* that the Reichenbach Persis was in the shops having her gas tanks taken off and a gilt bird cage put on for the mascot.

This was good press-agent dope for the Persis factory, but it stirred up some wise old gink to write a letter to Reichenbach in which he told all about the history of bats. The Duke read the letter, and it made him kind of serious.

"This scientific Johnny says we've got the bat wrong," he said.

I was in the pit under the car, with a pint of oil in my left eye. "How do you mean, Duke?" I asked.

"He says that bats have always been considered harbingers of mischance."

"Nothing worse than that?" I said. "Translate it into grammar and let's see what it sounds like."

"He means that bats don't bring good luck—they bring bad luck."

"I knew it," I said. "I came pretty nearly killing myself laughing before we found out where we could get a bat, and then when Archie brought it here, and I smelled it, I was sure."

Fritz Weid giggled. "I think your father meant that you was to pick up a horseshoe, or carry a dime made in 1874, or something like that. I never heard of a bat being good for anything in my life."

The Duke shook his head. "You're wrong," he said. "The old gentleman knows what he's talking about—don't you worry. A man stumbles on a good many weird superstitions on the road with a vaudeville act or a circus company. I'm willing to take his tip."

Fritz Weid said: "All right, but we don't want to slip up on this business in the San Diego, Duke. Let's look it up in a dictionary or some place."

Reichenbach said no, that he was satisfied; so Fritz and I let the matter drop. But that night, when we left Reichenbach at the garage, we went to the library and got a book from a girl and she found "Bats" for us and turned us loose. We waded around a while up to our necks in a fog, but finally I stumbled on a sentence that went about like this:

By Pliny and other early naturalists the bat was called a bird, and was generally regarded as a creature of ill omen, a superstitious feeling by no means extinct at the present day. Virgil, in telling about the Harpies, which were probably bats, describes them as *"diræ obscenæque volucres."*

I read it to Fritz as well as I could. "There, you see," I said. "That's what this writing person Virgil called them! They've left out some of the letters, but it looks to me like that must mean 'dirty, obscene vultures.' And it's one of those the Duke has picked to bring him luck! Come on, let's go out to Archie's and strangle that bat in its sleep."

Fritz was game, so we borrowed somebody's roadster from the garage and stepped out. I had Archie's address, and we routed him up and took him away from his books and made him come with us to the college where this obscenæque volucre was stabled. Archie grumbled a lot, but we told him it was important, and he got the keys from the janitor and we went up. Archie turned on the light and began to stumble around in the darnedest-smelling piles of junk I'd ever seen, and at last he let out a kind of squeak.

"What's the matter?" I said. "Did you step on a dead man, or have you only turned over a bucket of blood?"

"I believe, Mr. Walton," Archie said, much grieved, "that you are inclined to be ribald and frivolous. The fact is that a larceny has been committed here."

"Oh, well," I said, "from the looks of this place, you young collegers shouldn't mind that. How do you commit a larceny—with a knife or a hatchet?"

"A larceny is a theft, Mr. Walton," little Archie replied. "Some person has broken in here feloniously and stolen the box containing your specimen —of——"

"Of chiroptera insectivora?" I yelled. "Hooray! That saves us a lot of trouble! Here's a dollar for you, Archie—go home and go to bed. You look to me as though you needed sleep. And don't worry about the larceny. It's the best thing that was ever committed in this slaughterhouse yet, and nobody's going to kick. Good night—pleasant dreams!"

We went back to the hotel feeling a lot relieved. But we didn't tell Duke Reichenbach, because the next morning he said he'd been thinking it over and he'd written his father asking him exactly what it was he was to get for a mascot, and telling him to answer by wire. I winked at Fritz, and we kept our mouths shut. After the Duke had gone out to arrange for shipping the boat down to San Diego, I said to the mechanician:

"Let it slide. Reichenbach will forget all about it now, and everything will be all right. I'm glad we got rid of that animal—beast—volucre—or whatever it was."

"A larceny has been committed," Fritz said, grinning.

"Well," I said, "that's better than murder—for the bat. But what I'd like to know is, who was crazy enough to steal the thing?"

"A rival medical college, I guess," Fritz said.

We let it go at that.

III.

It looks to me as though there must be some rules or other in this game of life that we don't know very much about, but that are working all the time and leading us on from one little thing to another. I remember when I was a kid my grandmother used to believe in foreordination. I've forgotten what it is now, but in a general way it means that you get what's coming to you and that your life is doped out a long ways ahead. I've been thinking about this lately, because I noticed how it operated at San Diego when we went down to

try and shake the hoodoo on the Persis 16 and on Duke Reichenbach.

Here's what I mean: If Frank Lowry, the assistant starter, who is always in charge of the work-outs before the big automobile races all over the country—if he hadn't kidded me in Frisco about copping out a girl in every town we raced in, and if he hadn't been the first man we ran into at San Diego, and if it hadn't been in the garage where the cars were going to be stabled, and if there hadn't been one little Class AA stenographer named Miss Murray working in the garage office, and if Mr. Lowry hadn't started panning me about the girls, and if I hadn't looked over at this Miss Murray and smiled, and if she hadn't smiled back, and then if I hadn't just taken a running jump at luck and said that I was going to take Miss Murray to a show that night, and if she hadn't gotten kind of red and been game and told Mr. Lowry that was right—that we had a date already—if these things hadn't all happened, I would have missed something. And the San Diego might have turned out differently for Duke Reichenbach's Persis 16. I said "might" have. I tell you I'm not clear on the whole business yet in my mind.

But those little things did happen just as I've told you, and that night, after we'd been to a show, Miss Murray and I walked by the garage and she looked in the office window and said:

"There, now—I knew I'd forgotten something! It's certainly lucky we came around this way. Would you mind carrying a box out to the house for me?"

"What is it?" I said. "A box of candy from one of these San Diego Johnnies?"

"Candy?" she said, then she began to laugh. "Candy is good! Wait until you see!"

She unlocked the office door, and the minute she opened it I said to myself that right then I was going to get something that I didn't expect, because do you know what I smelled?

Friend Bat!

Oh, he was there, all right, in a front seat, as perfumery as a fertilizer works, and with a card on his little nest that went like this:

J. F. Slocum,
Persis Factory Team.
Handle With Care!

I sat down in a chair and began to laugh, and Miss Murray must have thought I'd had a drink or so that she hadn't kept count of. When I couldn't laugh any longer without lying down on the floor and rolling over, she said:

"Well, spring it, Mr. Walton, spring it! I haven't had a good laugh since Uncle Ed died."

I told her then—the whole story: how Slocum had been knifing Reichenbach, and about the plant to box him in this San Diego race, and the letter from his father, and about Archie, and the chiroptera insectivora, and the larceny that was committed, and all. And she took it all in fast, because that Miss Murray wasn't like any ordinary girl—just good looking and then you've said it all. Good looks was only the first thing Miss Murray had!

When I finished, she said: "I don't get the laugh yet."

"Why, that's easy," I said. "We found, after we had Mr. Chiroptera and so forth put away, that bats are bad luck instead of good, and the night Fritz Weid, the Duke's mechanician, went out with me to put our bat out of his misery, we discovered that somebody'd stolen it. Somebody was Jerry Slocum. I don't mind his having the bat—the more he has of them, the better I'll like it."

She had her laugh then, but pretty soon she said: "Well, you're not sure about this luck stuff with bats, are you?

It might bring Slocum more than you figure. How about that?"

I hadn't thought of that, but she made me see it. Then she said: "Look here, I've got a scheme."

"I'm for it," I said, "without hearing it."

"Don't act like Mr. Slocum," Miss Murray said, and that stopped me quick. "The scheme is this: I'll take care of the bat for Slocum the day of the race, and we'll watch how it works. If it seems to be bringing him anything, you give me the high sign and I'll tear off Slocum's card and put your driver's on the box. But if the bat don't work, I'll leave him on Slocum, and I hope that flirt goes into the curb and breaks an arm!"

I had to say that nothing could be fairer than that. If the bat was any good, it belonged to our team, anyway; and if it wasn't, it served Slocum right for committing the larceny that worried Archie Brininstool so. Either way you take it, the scheme listened sensible, and so I told Miss Murray what I thought of a game little girl like her, and she said to quit my kidding, and I dropped her at her front gate, and went on down to the hotel. And that's how Mr. Bat came back.

The practice work-outs put a lot of heart into us. The Persis 16 was running like a doped horse, and looked as good as ready money. Four entries out of the twenty met with accidents that week, and two of them were put out of business, but we went through without a scratch. It was a mean course to drive, and there was so much quick checking of the engine necessary that it was a strain on her all the time; but the day before the race we took her down and gave her a complete overhauling, and when she went out to the line the Duke shook hands with me and said:

"She'll do an average of sixty-five if nothing happens, and that's good enough to take better than third money."

If nothing happened! That was it. I kept wishing I knew for sure about bats.

Seventeen cars showed up for the start, and they were sent away in pairs fifteen seconds apart. The Duke's pacemate was an old wagon that looked like a steamboat and ran like an ambulance —and the only dangerous man behind them was Nikrent. Slocum's No. 11 had started in ninth place because of the scratches at the post, and all around him were the drivers who were figuring, according to the plan we had heard about, to check the Duke's pace so they could some of them pick up a no-stop record. From the pits we watched for this plant to be worked out, but for three rounds we didn't see anything suspicious.

As a matter of fact, that San Diego course is one that will keep any driver pretty busy for the first few laps when there are seventeen cars moving. It's up and down and around more S turns than a mountain railroad, with three bad right angles—two of them at the bottoms of steep grades, and with only one straightaway. Two entries went out in the first lap—one of them into the ditch at one of those grade bottoms—and a third came limping in for a tire change from crossing the railroad track too hard on the back stretch. In the third lap one of the big fellows forgot to shut off at an S turn and went off into the hills somersaulting, and when he came to he was down on his hands and knees looking for mushrooms.

The field was sort of scattered, then, in the fourth lap, and several of those smart pilots remembered about boxing Duke Reichenbach. I saw the mechanician of No. 6 give his driver some signal as they went by us at the end of the fourth, and after him came Slocum, and his mechanic pressed Jerry's arm and looked back, and then the Duke

and our old Persis 16 came roaring, and swung out to pass Slocum. I knew what was coming. The two cars ahead of him went over the hill side by side, and the Duke threw his weight on his brakes to keep from plowing right through them. And as he did this, I saw the Persis sort of flounder, and I knew something was wrong.

Well, that was the first move in the game, and they had hurt the Duke's entry already. No. 6 and Slocum in No. 11 went through a good mile ahead of the Duke that lap, and he crawled up to the pits and Fritz Weid was motioning with his left arm crooked—which meant a rear left tire. While we were jacking her up for the change, Weid slid down to me and told me to get under and give the brakes and brake rods a look. One of the brake bands was torn half through like a woman would rip a piece of cloth, and I told Fritz. "All right," he said, and slammed the new wheel home and gave the big wrench the last hard twist and jumped for his seat. I saw him yelling into the Duke's ear as they got off. If I had been driving that car, I would have thought more about that faulty brake band than the Duke seemed to.

He gained a little that lap, and more in the seventh and eighth—then Slocum and No. 15 closed in on him, just accidentally, you know, and crowded the Duke out as they went over the hill to make the first turn. He swerved wide and had to come pretty well in to make the sharp corner there beyond the hill, which hid our view. But when the three cars went up the hill toward the back stretch, I could see through a gap in the grand stand opposite me that the Duke was a very bad third with that bunch. I said to myself that in a few minutes it might be time to think about working the old chiroptera insectivora, and I kept my eye on Slocum to see how he was running.

In the ninth the Duke came in to the pit again, and Fritz Weid was signaling "Front right tire." Of course, as I was jacking her up, I had to break a jack lever, and we were forty seconds making the change. Fritz swore, and then he grinned at me. "Steady, old kid!" he said. "The Duke's got something wrong under the hood—but we don't know what it is yet. Those Indians are trying to work the squeeze play on us, all right."

There was no time for anything more than that, but in the twelfth, with Slocum almost a full lap ahead and running like a watch, our entry came to the pit for the third time in the race, and I said to myself: "Here's where we get a mascot." So I waved my handkerchief to Miss Murray, across the course, and she nodded; then the Duke stopped and Fritz Weid jerked up the hood. The Duke looked at me and growled:

"Darn bats for luck, anyhow!"

Do you know, it wasn't until that minute that I remembered that he still thought we had old chiroptera insectivora on the pay roll all the time. So, while I was loosening up the air valve, which had clogged, I laughed and said:

"This race isn't even started yet, Duke," and he laughed back. He was game, all right.

It was at the beginning of our thirteenth lap that we took on the bat, you notice. Maybe there's something in that. Anyhow, watch what happened.

Slocum then was a full lap to the good—he passed just before the Duke started on his way. There were two entries a few seconds ahead of Slocum. Then came about five or six others, then the Duke, then the ragtag with about as much chance as a captive balloon would have in a hydroaëroplane race, and then the old plug horse, touring around at fifty miles and the crew telling funny stories. Every lap or two some one would go out, but there were still enough ahead of us to make a mas-

cot something worth having if it was any good at all.

Then bang! Three cars came into the straightaway together that next round, and even from the pits we could see that they were making a drive for position. No one of them would give an inch. No one of them could gain on the others. It looked as though they were chained together like three horses to a gang plow; and the way they were rambling—say! I'm an old-timer, in a way, at this automobile-race business, but I never saw driving like that before or since! It was No. 6, Slocum in No. 11, and the Duke between them, and they went by the stands at eighty miles and over the hill, with a down grade and a sharp left turn not four hundred yards away, and nobody daring to shut off his engine!

Women screamed in the stands, and a kind of a hush fell, and the band stopped playing in the middle of a note —and I think we were all listening for the crash. It came—a ripping, tearing, grinding sound first—then just a breath of a wait, and then—boom! smash! Another grating noise—boom!—and a man's high-pitched cry, and silence.

The yellow flags were out on the course in an instant—and the guards running that way to keep the crowds back, and the crowds pushing over the guards and stumbling out into the course—and another car coming—Lord! I don't want to see that sort of thing often. We in the pits yelled for news, and sweated and shivered and prayed or cursed, and each of us wondered if it was our entry and no one knew, and two more cars went by with their brakes grinding, and then the word came flying from one person to another:

"No. 6 through the fence, smashed to kindling wood, crew unhurt. No. 11 —Slocum—three times over, engine a twisted ruin, and somewhere under it the driver and his mechanic!"

"And where's Reichenbach? Where's No. 16?"

"Slid between them somehow—skidding against the outside curb and rocking almost off her wheels, but straightened out and away!"

I looked across to where Miss Murray stood, with her handkerchief at her mouth and her cheeks chalky, and I shouted to her and laughed aloud. She sat down quite suddenly and put her head on the rail before her and hid her face. Thousands of women were doing that—but I noticed Miss Murray. Right beside her somewhere was that mascot bat. And on its cage was a card with Duke Reichenbach's name! Did I believe in luck? I don't know.

The yellow danger flags were rolled up presently, and the big red ones that mean "Course clear!" were waving instead, and on top of that the Duke came down the straightaway and he got a cheer that seemed to rock the ground under his flying wheels, and went on over the hill. Those two fellows had tried to cripple him good—and the game had turned wrong for them! The crowds had run out, then, and checked every other car in the race except the Duke. In that very lap he gained half what he had lost on the leaders, and by the thirtieth he was in third place. From then on it was only a question of how many stops he'd have to make. We watched him with our breath held, but he went flagging on through and never came in at all, and we knew that we were somewhere in the money.

It was an hour before we heard about Slocum and his mechanician. They were both at the hospital and badly hurt, but not fatally, the doctors said. No. 6 was one of the team that wanted the no-stop record. Well, it made one stop that race drivers never like to make, and that ended its chances of establishing any records at all. Its teammate, No. 14, went out at the Roseville turn with a rear wheel caved in, and its

driver fell on his steering post and knocked all his teeth out. As Duke Reichenbach passed the stand for the fiftieth time and got the green flag—which means "You are driving your last lap"—he was not twenty seconds behind the two leaders; and when he finished, he had nosed one of them out and finished in second place. If the course had been a mile longer, we would have had first money.

It was a good deal of a novelty to all our crew to win anything, and we were a lot of chattering maniacs when Reichenbach slowed down after an extra lap and stopped. Miss Murray stood up in the box across the course and waved to me, and the crowds cheered the Duke almost as much as they did the winner—for our entry had come up from nowhere and pushed the first man hard. And thousands of them had seen, from the top of the grand stand, that drive into the turn in the beginning of the fourteenth lap. It was the Duke's day, all right.

He was grinning at me when he stopped. "Some bat, eh, Eddie?" he called out, and he caught me off my guard for a second.

"Bat?" I said. "How did you know?" And then I remembered. "Oh, of course—yes—bat!" I said, as silly as a champagne souse. "Bat is right! I'm going to take the chiroptera insectivora down to the hotel to-night and give it a tenderloin steak smothered with onions. That bat isn't going to do another lick of work in its life!"

Fritz Weid pulled off his helmet, ducked through a lot of photographers, and came over to me. "Bat?" he said, growling. "You've got some of them in your head! You'd better explain fast or the Duke will be climbing you—and me!"

"That's all right, Fritz," I said. "Be as easy as you can, and get back in there so those photographers can make you famous. I found old Mister Bat in the thirteenth lap and signed him for the rest of the race."

"Are you kidding?" he said; but just then the Duke called for him to climb back in the boat for the movie camera man and I jumped up on the pit barrier and looked across for Miss Murray.

I thought she was sick. She was standing there with a face as solemn as a bride's, and she had the bat's cage up on the rail in front of her. She shook her head at me and pointed at the box, but I couldn't make her at all, so she picked the cage up, turned it wrong side to, and rattled it—and our mascot tumbled out to the ground.

He was as dead as a prohibition county!

Well, that knocked me four ways, with my head in a corner. I couldn't get across the course until the race was over, and I couldn't seem to think straight; and I climbed down slowly and wondered what would break loose next. But Frank Lowry, the assistant starter, had seen me and spotted Miss Murray, so he went over and spoke to her. I saw him reach down and pick up the late respected and give it the once over as wise as Archie Brininstool himself, and then he came across to me.

"Is this your bat?" he said, grinning.

"Belongs to the crew," I said, kind of peevish. I couldn't see anything funny about a bat—especially a dead one.

"What did you have it for?" Lowry said, and by that time Reichenbach and the others were listening. "Were you going to give it to Earl Cooper or send it to a class in natural history?"

"We got it for good luck," I said, still grouchy, because I didn't wish to stand there discussing that darn bat with about a million fellows—not right then. But Lowry wouldn't let up. He began to laugh.

"Why, this bat has been dead for three or four days," he said. "You ought to get a fresh one every little

while, Eddie. Here! Send it to the undertaker's!"

And he chucked the thing at me and ran out to flag down the seventh car.

One of the newspaper boys leaned over from the press stand then, and I said to myself: "Here is where I get it and get it good!" but instead this young chap said:

"Hey, Duke! Here's a telegram for you. Catch it!"

He gave it a toss, and it landed in the pit. I handed it to the Duke, and then all of a sudden I remembered about his wiring his father.

I said to Fritz Weid: "This thing is getting more tangled up all the time." And I turned to watch Reichenbach. He ripped open the envelope and then began to grin. He read a few lines and laughed. He finished it and he roared and leaned against the pit to brace himself, and he handed the wire to me. "Bats for good luck!" he said, and I read the paper.

It said:

CHARLES REICHENBACH, *Persis Team, San Diego, Cal.*

Bat you young fool I said cat cat cat black cat. If you got bat you'll probably be dead before this reaches you. Bats all the bad luck in world. CHARLES REICHENBACH, SR.

Wilbur Hall will have another auto-racing story in the July 7th POPULAR. It is called "For Charity."

THE CAPITALIST'S COUP

DANIEL G. REID, of Rock Island and American Can fame, years ago operated a tin-plate mill in Indiana. One time there came a strike in his plant, and Mr. Reid was forced either to close down his plant or bring strike breakers in to operate it.

A number of men were picked up in different towns in the State, and shipped by special train. Mr. Reid had arranged to get the men from the train to the plant by lining up deputies on each side of a small path leading thereto, in this manner protecting them from the strikers.

The load of men arrived in due course, and began their march to the plant through the lane of deputies. Promptly the strikers went into action. They broke through the protecting walls of officers, and began to rush the imported men back to the train.

Mr. Reid saw his plans fading away, and saw the money he had spent going for naught. He is a big man physically, and in a rage snatched one of the fleeing men and made for the gate of the plant. After considerable damage to himself and his burden, he managed to get into the mill yard, and the gate clanged behind him. Depositing his wriggling load on the ground, Mr. Reid wiped the perspiration from his brow, and said exultingly:

"Well, I got you in, all right, even if the rest did get away."

The man looked at him and replied: "I don't think you want me, though."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Reid, puzzled.

"Because," returned the man, with a grin, "I'm one of the strikers."

CANADA AT WAR

ONE of the surprises of this war to the world at large is the wonderful solidarity of the British empire, as evidenced by the action of its constituent parts. Consider the case of Canada, for example:

Some two years ago Canada said, in effect, to the British government, which was then carrying out an extensive and expensive program of naval construction: "We have arrived at a point where we think we should bear some part of the burden of imperial defense. We want to hold up our end. What form of contribution would you prefer—ships, money, or men?" The British government replied gratefully that since they had been asked, the most effective contribution would be in the form of warships. "The best," said they, "which science can build or money buy." Which evidently meant dreadnoughts, and left it up to Canada.

Now, Canada had no facilities for building warships, and so the Canadian government immediately proposed to vote thirty million dollars for the building of three dreadnoughts in Great Britain. But, somehow, the question got into the no-man's land of party politics, there was a bitter political fight, and the upshot of it was that Canada contributed nothing.

Then last August came war—big war, such as no living man had ever seen. It was too late to build warships. But what became of party politics? Both sides threw them in the discard. Parliament met, and voted fifty millions for military purposes. In six weeks a first expeditionary force of thirty-three thousand men, secured by voluntary enlistment, was mobilized, completely armed and equipped for service, and sent across the sea. To-day, Canada has a second expeditionary force of fifty thousand in training. In all, she has ninety-two thousand men under arms. The Canadian Parliament is voting one hundred millions more. In addition, each province has given money or horses or foodstuffs aggregating millions in value; and besides that, wealthy individuals have made gifts of motors, guns, ambulances, and what-not in profusion, and some have organized and equipped units at their own expense.

Now, the noteworthy feature of this is not that Canada has ninety-two thousand men under arms, but that she could, with equal ease, have had one

hundred and ninety-two thousand, if she could have armed them. The recruiting offices were swamped, and bitter were the complaints of the rejected. The word of war was a veritable Fiery Cross. Men came from the uttermost parts of the vast Dominion, from the far McKenzie, the Slave, from the Arctic Circle itself, hitting the trail, at their own expense, for the nearest recruiting station.

Why? They were not reservists. There was no compulsion. Canada was in no danger of invasion. Most of them had never seen England; nor, as a matter of fact, had they any special affection for the British as a people. Those in the far places did not even know what the war was about when they started for it. Then why?

Simply because the empire was at war. That was sufficient. For years, many people have been wondering what would happen to that fabric under strain. Now the test has been made, and the result proves that whatever the ties which bind it, they are well forged. It is, in effect, a clan of nations, in peace each going its own way upon its own affairs, but in war rallying fiercely to the call of the blood and the clan.

And there is no doubt that Canada is in the game to stay. "We are proud of what we have already done," said the Canadian premier in Parliament a few months ago, "but the only limit to what we will do in the future is the empire's need."

THE SPIRIT OF GERMANY

ON the other hand, the war in Europe has already proved beyond cavil the cohesion of the German empire, as founded by Bismarck and governed by the house of Hohenzollern. It is difficult to realize the fact that a half century ago the nation was composed of some twenty-six duchies and principalities, one jealous of another, the southern states being suspicious of and antagonistic to the northern group; Prussia being particularly hated and abused as "the land of the corporal's stick."

Teuton historians have been fond of comparing the welding of the German empire to a broken sword miraculously refashioned into a better blade than ever, Bismarck being its Siegfried. Carrying out that image, we may say that the sword is to-day receiving its baptism in blood and fire—its first and perhaps final test. Whether it will break or bend, or come through unscathed, is for the future to show.

Meanwhile, the unity and strength of the empire have been all that its most ardent believer could have wished, its elements of discord having dissolved in the crucible of a national crisis. As an instance of the remarkable change in public feeling, we recall the hornet socialists that have tormented the body politic for a decade or more putting their stings at command of the kaiser. Enemies of compulsory militarism doffed their cloaks of meekness, shouldered guns, and stood in the ranks of the fighters. More extraordinary than these transformations, perhaps, was the rise of the thinkers, the men who had weighed the follies of the world and knew the weaknesses of mankind. Together they rose in powerful defense of the fatherland, casting aside their philosophic and academic calm at the sound of the tocsin, and, with one voice, justifying the course of events as that decreed by God! Wonderful, too, the devotion and sacrifice of the women. Like that Prussian mother in the war of liberation of 1813, many

of them have echoed her answer to the question as to who is the noblest woman: "She who has given most sons to die for the fatherland."

The spirit of nationality, of patriotism in its highest form, is showing splendidly its effective and practical force in Germany to-day.

WHOLESOMENESS

THERE is a deal of sincerity in any life that simply flounders on. Just to make the motions, demanded by the mere act of living, requires a habit and a control. The work that earns the bread and the good nature that wins a home and friends: there is effort enough to hold together existence from crumbling. If a man, if any man, were wholly false, or half false, he would rear sufficient trouble in a fortnight to rend him. No. There is an integrity in the weakest of us that sets us plodding, and keeps us patient.

BELIEF

WHEN primitive man was hungry, he laid around him for what would satisfy. He found roots that were palatable but poisonous, herbs that were bitter in his mouth, substances brittle and indigestible. Driven by his hunger, he experimented on the green teeming earth about him till he found the growths that would feed his needs. Very late in history came science to correct his practice in minor particulars, to alter details very slightly. It builds up a theory of food values. It recommends emphasis on neglected values. It winnows out foolish indulgences.

He has had a similar hunger of the spirit. He has demanded that which would strengthen him to continue his existence. He has tasted of exotics, experimented in poisons, fed on dry husks.

He sought to answer the hunger of his spirit by work. But he found work futile, monotonous, imperfect. He failed in just the thing he aimed at, or, succeeding, found the achievement impermanent and little worth the struggle.

He sought to lose his loneliness in care for creatures like himself, earth-bound, with a tenure as frail as his own. But here, as elsewhere, he was thwarted. At the moment when his love reached its height, he was bereaved by death, or agencies more unkind: misunderstanding, distance, the growth of one outpacing that of the other. Always a break came in the perfect communion. Mischance here, too, had marked him for her own.

In his own life he sought his answer. Did he not have a citadel of strength in his unflinching heart? Could he not front the ill luck of things with a stout courage and a scorn for circumstance? But here he met with a profound dissatisfaction. For he early discovered that he could not walk a day without sin.

The mystery of life left him with an emptiness. He came to desire a presence that meant well for him, that was not neglectful, nor disdainful, nor malign. He found himself placed in a vast and careless universe which he could not comprehend. The loneliness of his position set up a longing for companionship. He needed to feel something at hand which cared for him in

those immense spaces of indifference. He found that nothing short of belief could carry him on: belief in a divinely assisted process which makes for good, and belief in a principle of love, which protects all weak things, understands all faulty things, and gathers up failure, grief, and sin.

BIG MONEY FOR WIZARDS IN FIGURES

BOOKKEEPING is generally regarded as a poorly paid vocation. Accountancy—which is to bookkeeping what higher mathematics is to ordinary arithmetic—is, however, the best paid of any of the professions. The successful chartered accountant receives bigger fees than the successful lawyer or doctor.

The public or chartered accountant's profession is less than half a century old in this country, and not a great deal more than that in Great Britain. Merely analyzing figures is only a relatively small part of the expert accountant's business. Of course, his services are required to go over a firm's books and see that they have been properly kept, but the custom is growing of having him certify to other things than matters of arithmetic. Nowadays the expert accountant looks into the general conduct of a business. He is employed to reorganize going concerns quite as often as he is to hold post-mortems on those that have failed.

To create business systems for large corporations is another part of his work. One large firm of public accountants in New York, a few years ago, received a fee of two hundred thousand dollars for mapping out a complete plan of organization for a big organization. Another is said to have received an even larger fee for similar work connected with a great transportation company, and still another has performed like services for one of the departments of the Federal government.

Great corporations are often in need of statistics which their own staffs have not time to compile. Chartered accountants are employed, sometimes for one or two years continuously, at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Probably the biggest task of all is the valuation of the railroads that is now going on, which it has been variously estimated will cost from fifty million to seventy-five million dollars, and take a number of years. A great portion of this huge task is being done by the expert accountants.

In States where an inheritance tax is assessed there is much for these wizards in figures to do in straightening out the estates of very rich men and in arriving at the value of the property they leave. The principal object of this is to get at the figures for an exact appraisal. This work is particularly difficult, but the fees for it are often considerably more than those of the lawyers.

The field for accountants has broadened lately through the growing custom of banks demanding the certification of borrowers' statements by certified public accountants. In the past it was the universal custom for the borrower to render his account of resources and liabilities without this support, but, despite stringent laws and severe penalties, abuses crept in. Now, when a bank is asked to lend a considerable sum of money to any business, it is likely to insist that it shall be given a clean bill of health by an outside expert. While this is a good thing for the accountants, it is also excellent for the business and the banks, for it often exposes weaknesses that can be corrected before they become fatal.

The Man Who Could Do Everything

By Albert Payson Terhune

Author of "The Fate Chaser," "An Amateur War Lord," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Of the three men, only Milwood attracted notice in the metropolis for brilliance and enterprise. Craig was a promising metallurgist, while the other man of the trio, Keeler, was in the district attorney's office, his hobby criminology, but his disposition diffident. The same night that Milwood invites Craig to a dinner party, Keeler calls. Being shy, Keeler tells the Japanese servant that he will wait in the back hall until Milwood is disengaged. While there Keeler suddenly becomes aware of a tiny, far-off voice threatening to kill someone. He is startled into listening for more. Nothing but a buzzing noise rewards him. Then, quite as suddenly as before, he hears an echo of fierce altercation. Near as he can judge they are the voices of his two friends, Craig and Milwood, hotly arguing over a crooked deal. Again, there is a threat of death, and Craig leaves the distant room, apparently. Now a woman's voice is mingled with that of Milwood. She pleads for her father. Milwood answers by making violent love to the woman; he suggests that they run off together. She replies that her husband would kill Milwood if he knew of his treachery. At this moment Ichi, the Jap servant, interrupts the tense dialogue to tell the woman—Mrs. Van Vleck—that her sister suggests it is time to leave. Keeler hears the woman swish out of the room and then hears Milwood curse Ichi and knock him down. Thoroughly alarmed, Keeler leaves his place in the back hall and slips away, but not before discovering that he had overheard all these things through a disused speaking-tube. Interested in just such problems Keeler makes notes of the extraordinary number of threats and dangers hanging over Milwood's head. Nevertheless, he is startled next morning to read glaring headlines announcing the murder of Milwood, whose body has been found with a silver bullet through the head and the face disfigured beyond recognition from sulphuric acid burns. Keeler makes up his mind to try his hand at solving the mystery. Ichi is being held as suspect. Going to headquarters, Keeler requests Chief Pyne to accompany him to the scene of crime. Keeler examines the body and the premises and makes a discovery. He turns to Pyne with the conclusion that the Jap is innocent. "You can let him go free!" he says to the bewildered chief of police. Keeler resolves to search out Mrs. Van Vleck. He telephones to her, with startling results—she faints. Keeler is on his way to her home when he sees a suspicious-looking fellow; a man he had noticed lurking about Milwood's place. Keeler shadows him, only to discover the chap is a secret-service agent!

(In Four Parts—Part Three)

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VAN VLECK CHAUFFEUR.

"WHY didn't you tell me you were a secret-service agent?" said Keeler. The distressing thought had just come to him that all this trouble and tomfoolery, all this conjecture and complex suspicion might have been avoided if only the man before him had stated the facts of the case.

"Why didn't I tell you?" echoed the secret-service man, his voice breaking in shrill sarcasm. "Why didn't I tell you? Why should I tell you, little one? Is your job in life just hanging around loose, waiting to be confided in? None of this guff now! See? What's the main idea? And are you spooffin', or were one-half your ancestors squirrels and the other half nuts, huh?"

"It would have been so much simpler, don't you see?" persisted Keeler. "All this could have been done away with and the time wasted could have been employed in furthering the elimination process. We could have worked together and——"

"Worked together!"

The big man's gaze traveled in underestimating appraisal from the tips

This story began in the POPULAR dated May 23rd, and can be ordered at the news stands.

of the little man's vici-kid, broad-toed shoes to the frayed edges of his wing collar. Then to make sure he hadn't slighted any point that would bear criticism, he made the return trip just as faithfully.

"Say what's eating this guy?" he appealed to the policeman, who had become a silent member. "Can't he sublet that top apartment of his? It's a shame to leave it vacant all year round."

"Here youse; clear out!" warned the bluecoat, passing along the gathered crowd. "This here ain't no moving-picture comp'ny, and it ain't a fight. It's a little mistake between two gentlemen. Now beat it! The whole bunch —or I'll get lively with my stick."

"Say, who are you, Percival?" asked the secret-service man as the hangers-on dispersed. "What are you?"

"I'm a detective," asserted Keeler as unostentatiously as most people confess to menial occupations.

The former suspect howled. His hilarity was deafening. Besides that, it was disturbing and goat getting.

"You a detective!" he jeered. "A little soda-fountain habitué like you! A poor little simp who spends all his time barking at the foot of a flagpole when he knows blamed well there ain't any branches on the darned thing to conceal anybody! You a detective!"

"On the district attorney's staff," added Keeler. "Please do not laugh. I do not like it. I am going back to that restaurant now and pay my check."

"Are you?" mocked the other. "For that elaborate feed you had? Well, so long, Sherlock! Better luck next time."

"Oh, I see!" observed Keeler quietly. "That means that I'll have to pay your check, too, my friend."

The gentle little sting didn't penetrate the hide of the secret agent. He and the bluecoat walked off together, chuckling, their heads close together. Twice they looked back at Keeler, and he looked at them. There was no venom in his heart. Just a great, overwhelming self-reproach—and humiliation.

A little way down the path, under an overhanging bush, he caught sight of an empty bench. Slowly he sought its rest. A deep sigh escaped him. The low afternoon light was coating the river with layers of crimson gold. The black little tugs, chugging away with their heavy tows, cut through the reflected radiance of the setting sun.

Keeler looked cautiously to the left and right. He stared down the grassy slope before him. He even turned and deliberately examined the bush directly behind him.

Then, when he was absolutely sure that there were no eavesdroppers, he drew the "suspected list" from his pocket and very shamefacedly drew his monogrammed silver pencil through the fifth item, the item beginning: "A big, ugly-faced chap hiding in bushes on lawn."

Just a moment longer he sat there. It was quiet. The peace of it soothed his soul. He thought he would like to stay longer. Maybe some evening when this case was all cleared up he would bring a couple of chicken sandwiches and an apple with him and sit there under the trees and watch the day die and the night dawn and listen to the river sounds and pretend the shifting boat lights were modern fireflies who had found that it paid to advertise. Yes, if he should bring a couple of newspapers to sit on—to protect him from the ground damp—and a light sweater he imagined it would be a very pleasant thing to do.

Two children, roller skating, slid into his line of vision. They were calling gayly to each other. Suddenly the larger of the two stumbled, and tried to save herself by catching hold of a tree trunk, but was unsuccessful.

As she fell, and the cry of dismay from the other child reached his ears, Keeler jumped guiltily. The thud and

scream that he had heard over the wire that afternoon had until now entirely escaped his mind.

First he looked to see if the child had injured herself. Evidently not, for already she had picked herself up and was almost out of sight. He wondered if Mrs. van Vleck had recovered so quickly.

If she had—her suspicions aroused by his phone message—and all this time having elapsed between! He shook himself impatiently. If the woman had a vestige of guilt concerning the whole affair she might have disappeared before now. Even if she were not guilty, a woman of her standing would wish to avoid all such notoriety.

Well, if she were the criminal he had bungled it good and plenty. "Latest methods in shadowing crooks," he scoffed, "is to call them up and let them know you're coming." He scorned himself with caustic ridicule. He wondered what the "old man" would think of him now. He dwelt on the profound respect and admiration for his ability that Chief Pyne had professed.

Away down deep he knew he would never breathe the details of his comedy of errors. A green amateur could not have mussed things up into a classier hodgepodge. If that big secret-service man went and blabbed he'd never hear the end of it. The boys would be sending him field glasses, microscopes, bottles of soothing sirup, and rubber heels forever.

"I'm going to make a try at this lady, anyway," he confided boldly to a miserably thin and mangy-looking squirrel that had suddenly become his neighbor on the bench. He felt in his pockets for a possible edible crumb, knowing very well that he had nothing but fountain pens, erasers, and quill toothpicks.

"You're a wretched little beast, aren't you?" he pitied softly, and the tiny thing crept closer in more urgent supplication. "I tell you what I'll do. If you wait here I'll go up to Broadway and get you a bag of nuts."

And the strangest thing about it is that Wayne Keeler would have done just that thing if the squirrel had not scampered away, in cold disdain, at that moment.

The waiters eyed him with undisguised suspicion when he walked into the German restaurant for the second time. The place was practically empty. Alone in one corner a bush-bearded patron was deep in the war humor of *Simplicissimus*. The waiters stood in little, excited groups, discussing the late happening and offering a weird variety of solutions.

He called for the two checks, and paid them in a deprecatory manner that completely outwitted the bunch of open-mouthed, conjecturing Teutons. He left a quarter in the palm of the man who brought his change, and walked out of the place.

In front was a string of taxis stationed there to catch the patronage which issued from the subway station.

He picked out the sanest-looking chauffeur and gave him the number of Mrs. van Vleck's home. Then he changed his mind.

"Just drive me to the corner of that street and West End Avenue," he countermanded. "Stop on the southwest corner. And don't blow your horn unless it's absolutely necessary. In those quiet residential side streets a horn sounds like a blast to rouse the dead—and I don't want to rouse anybody."

Keeler leaned his head back in the shadow of the cab, and closed his eyes, while the chauffeur cranked up and puttered around the radiator.

Something had happened to Keeler that had never happened before. The keen edge of his enthusiasm was blunted. He was still interested and eager to be the first to unravel the tangled threads. But the avid zeal with

which he had entered upon the mystery was gone.

Of course, running up blind alleys and butting into stone walls will knock the ardor out of almost anybody. But it had never knocked it out of him before.

He hoped that he would stumble across something at the Van Vleck home to stir the smoldering embers into a brisk blaze again. The taxi started from the curb with a vicious jolt. The man had neglected to throw off his emergency brake. Keeler slid back on the seat and braced his feet in preparation for another upheaval. But the cab rolled along right smoothly for at least three blocks.

Then it began to act queerly. The engine missed, sputtered, and finally throbbed away madly, as if it were suffering from too high blood pressure. The chauffeur seemed trying to pick out a tune on the gears, if one could judge from the number of times and the rapidity with which he shifted them.

Keeler began to get nervous. Not that he feared an accident. But the jolting and thumping and spasmodic progress was making his head ache. He did not want his head to begin to ache right then, because he never took headache remedies, on account of their heart-depressive properties; and his own cure that had never failed him—great drafts of very hot boiled water, followed by a short nap—was not wholly feasible at the moment.

He leaned out the side window, took a good look, and then, knowing less about an automobile than almost anything else in the world, he addressed the chauffeur.

"What seems to be the matter?" he asked gently.

Every one who has driven a car knows that any tirade of scorn or even mild abuse, from a passenger is easier to stomach than that maddening phrase: "What seems to be the matter?"

"Just a minute! She'll be all right, sir." The chauffeur spoke with a caustic assurance that was not even skin deep.

And when after a few more minutes of broncho busting, interlarded with a couple of fancy fox-trot intricacies, the machine came to a dead stop, Keeler decided that the Van Vleck house was within walking distance.

He stepped out quietly, and came alongside the engine, displaying great concern.

"It's very hard to keep a car in good running order, isn't it?" he inquired. Not because he wanted the information, but because he felt sorry for the chauffeur.

"Yeh, it's fierce!" was the fervent retort. "But she ain't never done this before—that is, not 'xactly. There may be somethin' wrong in the cylinders—full of carbon, perhaps; or then again the valves may need grinding; yuh can't tell whether the oilin' system's workin' up to snuff; and the carburetor may need adjustin', or the mixture's too rich. Even the distributing plug could make it act like this, or maybe water in the gasoline. Perhaps it's been standing too long—and then again it's just possible that a couple of bolts are loose. See?"

"Say!" exclaimed Keeler in honest admiration. "For one set of symptoms exhibited I'll bet you could put it all over the best diagnostician in the medical world—as far as a list of possible causes goes. You're a wonder!"

The man smiled in sheepish appreciation.

"Well, yuh see, I understand a car. I c'n take down and assemble any car that was ever manufactured!"

"Really!" marveled Keeler. "Well, what I want to know is how you're going to locate which one of these dire things is the direct cause of the sudden fatigue felt by the machine. Is there

such a thing as an automobile stethoscope or a motor thermometer or——"

"Oh, sure, sure! We got all the tools goin' at the garage. It won't take more'n half to three-quarters of a day to fix her up. Yuh see, yuh just begin an' fix everything that might be the matter an' you're sure to hit it. See?"

Keeler overpaid him and hastened away. The dreariness of that chauffeur's outlook and the hopelessness of his methods of discovery formed the needed impetus to his own case. If it consumed all that imagination, perseverance, and hard labor to locate a clew in an automobile—why, detectiving was a cinch.

He turned in at the Van Vleck corner five minutes later. The house was lighted from basement to attic. Keeler felt a wonderful flood of confidence sweep over him. She had not left the city, even though she had had hours of warning. Why? Was it because she did not know anything about the murder? Or because she did—and thought it wiser to allay suspicion by remaining?

He stood across the street, in the fast-gathering gloom, and watched for a moment. The shades were all drawn. Every few seconds a black shadow flickered across the windows on the second-floor front. On no other floor was there a sign of life, although nearly all the rooms were brilliantly lighted.

Keeler tried to discover whether the shadow was thrown by the figure of a man or woman. Whichever it was, the person did not pass close enough to the window for him to determine positively.

A few seconds later the figure stopped directly in front of the window and raised its arms. It was a woman. Transparent sleeves fell away from the rounded elbows, and rebellious little curls softened the smooth outline of the head.

Maids are not in the habit of wearing negligees—Keeler only surmised this—so the figure must be that of Mrs. van Vleck. He crossed the street.

He had mounted two steps of the brownstone stoop when the front door of the house was thrown open and the reeling figure of a man shot out into the vestibule and caught at a doorknob for support. Then the door slammed behind him.

Keeler shrank into the shadow of the post at the bottom of the stoop. He wanted to get a good look at the man without being seen. He soon found how futile his hope had been. He was already discovered.

The unsteady figure flopped from the vestibule to the top step and leaned forward at an angle dangerous to its present powers of equilibrium.

"I see you! I see you!" it prattled as if they two were participating in a game of hide and seek.

Keeler stepped into more prominent view, and mounted a few more steps. At that the irresponsible man flung himself into the little detective's arms and clung to his neck in affectionate abandon. The force of the impact of a heavy body falling from a height almost threw Keeler backward to the sidewalk. By hanging to the stone railing with his left arm he kept his balance.

"Yeh, I see you an' I know all 'bout you!" effused the stranger. "I know who—who—y'are an' everythin'!"

"You have the advantage over me," murmured Keeler coldly.

" 'Vantage nothin'!" expostulated the other. "Y'are a reporter—a newspaper reporter. Yessir! An' you've c-come here—hic—you've c-come here to find out all about a scandal in high life. An' I'm the guy—I'm the guy that put the 'can' in that scandal! Ha! Lissen! Joke—didn't I make a joke? Y' didn't laugh."

Keeler bolstered him up more firmly. "You know a lot, do you?" he asked cautiously.

"Lot? Sh'd say I do. Sh'd guess

yes! I know most! Yessir, I know most. An' I'll tell yuh b-because I like yuh. I like y'r style. See! I c'n tell a reporter a mile off. I—I saw one once. He was just like you, friend."

"And who are you?"

"Me? I'm—why, I'm the ch-chauffeur. V-Van V-Vlecks' chauffeur. I ain't! I *was!* Yeh, I'm the ch-chauffeur! An' I'm goin' to tell you. Tell whole story. Then maybe they'll think twice before they fire me again."

CHAPTER XVIII.

GETTING AT THE SECRET.

Keeler supported the practically helpless man down the remaining steps and propped him up against the round stone post at the bottom. For a moment he was puzzled. He felt an instinctive loathing at contact with this disgustingly intoxicated creature, but he realized that if he withdrew his support there would be a total collapse, and then he could whistle for his information.

The point to be decided quickly was whether it were wiser to deposit the man in some place where he would be safe and quiet, and interview Mrs. van Vleck first, or whether the information the man was so eager to give would be an asset in the eventual interview with the lady.

Evidently she was not going to make a get-away. There was nothing to indicate that the bird was going to try her wings. A second advantage in postponing the talk with her was that it would give the woman a chance to get over her hysteria on the subject—and look at it all in a sane light.

Keeler decided.

He attempted first to persuade the chauffeur to walk a few steps. The attempt was unsuccessful. The man admitted frankly that he "guessed he'd go to sleep right there." Keeler shook him.

"Say, do you want a drink?" he buzzed loudly into his ear.

"F-foolish question number two m-million one hundred an'——" The indistinct syllables trailed off into nothingness.

"Well, now you listen to me and you'll get one."

There was a cold, would-be threatening note in Keeler's voice that carried conviction through the alcohol-steeped tissues of the chauffeur's brain. He looked startled.

"I'm going to leave you here while I look for a taxi," Keeler went on hurriedly, though with exaggerated distinctness. "Then I'm coming back to get you and we're going down to a decent café, where we can get some swell booze. See?"

"What'll y' have?" murmured the submerged one, cordial, though semi-conscious. "Make it a little c-clam broth for me."

"But you must promise you won't go away until I get back. Remember, if you do, you're going to get into serious trouble. You need somebody to take care of you for a few hours, because you aren't able to take care of yourself. And most likely if I let you go you'd be in jail, or under a third degree before morning. Remember, if the police get hold of you it'll be more than a week-end trip."

"Say, cap, mind my cush for me, will yuh? I just g-got paid, and th' fellers might swipe it on me, see?"

He dragged out a badly crumpled wad with a yellow wrapper. This he stuffed loosely into Keeler's hands.

"Th' cab an' th' supper's on me," he insisted stubbornly.

"We'll talk about that later," announced Keeler.

He settled him snugly into a little niche at the curve in the railing. Then he went in search of a cab. He found one rolling slowly along West End Ave-

nue, jumped in, and drove back to the Van Vleck house.

Through the fleecy dusk no dark shape was visible at the bottom of the stoop. Keeler nearly swore. Where on earth had the fellow gone to in those few minutes?

He could not have stumbled back into the house, because his late assisted exit did not denote exactly that they were going to keep the lamp burning in the window for him any more.

Keeler explored the areaway and the vestibule; he even went through the basement to examine the back yard. No trace of the chauffeur could be found.

He was just about to run up the steps and ring the front-door bell when a voice from across the street stopped him.

There, diagonally opposite, in exactly the same position that he had assumed on the Van Vleck's stoop, was the chauffeur.

"The moon was too strong in my eyes," he explained. "Had to move across the street. Oh, please, please lead me to l-liquid refreshment. I am perishing with thirst."

The "moon" turned out to be a huge arc light that had just burst into bloom at the corner. Keeler tried to make that point clear as he assisted his new-found informant into the taxi. The first stupid daze was beginning to wear off. The man was getting querulous.

"What's your name?" demanded Keeler curtly.

"Dave. The madam used to call me a 'prince' up to a few days ago. Well, she knew she had a g-good—hic—thing. There ain't so many these days that c'n keep their mouth shut. Don't you know there ain't?"

"That's right. Especially when there's anything to keep your mouth shut about."

The little man jumped in, and gave the signal to start. Dave had settled into his corner. He was maintaining a dignified silence.

"I say, especially when there's anything to keep your mouth shut about," repeated Keeler, anxious to get him started.

"Oh, I had plenty I could 'a' squealed about, don't you fret! What I ain't got stored up under my hat! Say, take it from me that set is rotten!"

He lurched sideways, and became extremely confidential.

"I always thought so," gossiped Keeler, without the faintest idea of what set he meant.

"Yessir. You thought right."

Dave looked out of the window and endeavored to keep his head stationary long enough to get a clear focus in the passing scene. He gathered that they were going out of the neighborhood.

"What're we goin' downtown for?" he grumbled peevishly. "There's lots of good booze right round here. Leave it to me, I c'n lead you to it."

That was exactly what Keeler did not want. He thought it about time to begin to sober up the ebullient spirit beside him. A drunken man's evidence —although it may be gospel truth— cannot be relied upon. The little man gripped Dave's forearm firmly.

"I want you to get this," he said slowly, and waited till the shifting eyes sought his. "I'm taking you out of the neighborhood for two reasons. One is because if the police come looking for you they'll go to your old haunts, of course. The other is that I don't want to be seen with you at those places. Your old cronies would surely think something was up if they saw you hob-nobbing with a stranger. You see how I'm trying to protect you—don't you, Dave?"

"You sure are a sport! You're— you're a prince!" exclaimed Dave, using the most extravagantly flattering term that had ever been bestowed upon himself. "What're going to have when we

light, eh? I think I'll start in pr-prelim'naries with a rye high. What's yours, eh?"

"Oh, I'm just going to take a glass of Apollinaris if you don't mind. You see, I want to have a clear head for the next few hours."

"Say, lissen!" Dave expostulated. "I had a hunch right along that you was leading me to a seltzer lemonade. Have a heart, can't you?"

"I think, when I've explained things to you," Keeler told him gently, "you'll can the drink for to-night of your own free will. Because you've got a good head, Dave. The shape of your forehead indicates a clever brain."

Dave swallowed bait, hook and all.

"I want to impress upon you," continued Keeler, watching closely the effect of every word, "the very important position you occupy in this case. Just think of all the things you know about it that other people don't know! Things that they want to know—and who's going to tell them? You! Only *you!* Do you begin to see how necessary it's going to be for your brain to clear up?"

"Aw, just one dinky little rye high ain't going to spiff me! You don't know your Cousin Hiram's capacity. I think my hat's inflamed my head. It feels feverish. The band must be too tight and stopped the circulation."

"And another high ball will stop it some more." Keeler was being a deliberate kill-joy. "Now, see here, be sensible for a half hour, anyway. I'm interested in the story you're going to tell. And I know that if you'll only keep your head clear you'll tell it with the art of a born dramatist."

From that moment, Keeler could have asked anything, to the half of his kingdom, from Dave, and have the request granted on the spot.

The taxi stopped in front of a Longacre Square hotel. Keeler started to get out. A little farther down Broadway, a fascinating green-red-and-yellow electric sign, made up of queer-looking dragons that did things, denoted a chop-suey joint.

"Say, if yuh don't mind," suggested Dave, "let's go up to the chink's instead and eat a trough full of that prize feed of his. They don't give you nothin' but tea up there, anyway," this last sheepishly.

They found a table for two in a little alcove, hung with wistaria blooms and tiny Chinese lanterns. They were completely isolated from the rest of the diners. No one could hear their conversation; and from only two tables—in direct line with theirs—were they visible.

Dave ordered by number instead of risking the complicated names that meant pork, lobster, and chicken. Keeler had never eaten chop suey. He never would. There wasn't any doubt about it in his own mind. The rice that they served in little, green-sprigged bowls was going to be his life-saver.

"Why are you sore on the Van Vlecks, Dave?"

The question was so abrupt and so unexpected that it stunned the man opposite him. Keeler watched his hands. Sure enough! They closed spasmodically on each other.

"Because they fired me like a dog, without a word of recommendation. Kicked me out! Van Vleck did! And when I went back to get my pay, I tanked up a bit so that I'd have courage to smash him if I needed to. And then the darned stuff got me—and he kicked me out again! Wait till I get him by the throat! Wait till I tell all I know! I'll have him kissing my feet before I'm through."

"You knew Milwood, of course. Didn't you?"

"Did I know him? I used to drive the madam there a couple of times a week. Drove her there last night, anyhow."

"So you were there last night?"

"Sure I was there."

"But you didn't know until late this morning that the body had been found?"

"No. Gee, it scared me stiff when I read it."

"What time did you and the madam reach home from Bay Ridge?" questioned Keeler.

"Now, look here," interrupted Dave, "I gave you my word that I was going to spiel the story. So you better let me tell it in my own way. It won't take long."

"That suits me," muttered Keeler.

"In the first place," began Dave seriously, "I want to tell you that I was always glad to take the madam over to one of them dinners that Milwood used to give so often, because the chauffeurs used to get swell feed, too—and plenty of booze.

"Last night word was sent down for me to get ready and bring the car around almost three-quarters of an hour too early; and it was pulling teeth then to get the madam away.

"We made the trip over in good time. There wasn't a holdup or an unpleasantness all the way into the city. The cook over at Milwood's—he's a Jap—had gave me a small flask for my hip pocket. And while I was waiting for the madam, a rotten night wind blew up from the bay down there. I drank a little more'n was good for me—and when I pulled up at the door I guess I was pretty well fixed.

"Well, the madam ran up the stoop and disappeared into the hall. Just as I was goin' to start for the garage, I found something on the floor, tangled up in my feet. It was the lace scarf my madam had worn over her head to the dinner. I knew how she valued it. I heard her tell one of her friends one day that it had been brought to her from Spain by a man who was an old friend of her father's.

"I heard her say that it was one of the finest specimens of Spanish lace there is, and that she'd rather lose her diamond bracelet than lose that. So you can imagine I was good an' particular the way I ran right into the house with it.

"The front door was open. A carelessness of the madam. She was the last one to go in that way. Of course, when the door was open that way, I went in without ringing.

"I heard sounds of folks quarreling in the library. The doors was shut. I crept along the hall, just for fun, to listen. It was the natural thing to do," he added, in defiant self-defense. "There was a terrible fight going on between the madam and Mr. van Vleck. And then, when it was over and——"

Keeler leaned across the table and let his hand fall heavily on Dave's working fingers.

"You say Mr. and Mrs. van Vleck were having a violent quarrel. Did you hear the subject of that quarrel?"

"Sure, I did!" exclaimed the chauffeur, undismayed. "I heard every word spoke by both of 'em. Why, gee! The quarrel was over where the madam had just come from—Milwood's. He hated to have her go there. I figure it out like this: She got home and maybe found that he was there before her; so I s'pose she thought it'd be easier to lie and say she'd been somewhere else. So she did. But it didn't go down. See? The boss was on to her. And he told her a few plain facts about her actions. Oh, gee! It was a reg'lar hoopla scene, like yuh see in plays, y' know!"

"Were there any blows exchanged?"

Keeler watched Dave with an eye that missed nothing—not even the smallest shade in the man's expression. He felt that he was telling the truth. And yet he had known so many cases where a person, unaware of any story-telling ability on his own part, becomes carried away by his unsuspected eloquence, and rushes on and on, adding any stray, little embellishment that he thinks will

add to the dramatic value of the recital.

"D'you mean did he hit her? Aw, no! She'd 'a' killed him if he had. You don't know the madam. She's prouder'n a queen—and a temper like a hailstorm. Hit her? I should guess not! God help the man who ever insulted or struck the madam!"

Keeler looked at this man across the table from him. He had spoken of great hunger after they entered the place, yet there lay his little silver dish of chop suey and uncovered bowl of rice, untouched and cold. There was something he did not understand, something that would have to be explained before he could believe the man absolutely sincere.

"You imply great admiration for Mrs. van Vleck in your tone, Dave," he remarked, with elaborate indifference. "All the way through, you have seemed to admit with some reluctance that she is an unusual woman. If you have that exalted opinion of her, why are you so anxious to tell all you know—instead of shielding her?"

"Because she didn't shield me when she could have!" snarled Dave, with the religion of "pay back in kind." "She could always hold her own in scraps with her husband, and many's the time I lied myself blue in the face—yes, an' took a callin' down, too—to save her a minute's unpleasantness. But never again! She egged him on when he started to kick me out! Yes, sir, egged him on!"

"Did he accuse her of being too friendly with Milwood?"

Dave grinned.

"Did he? Say, what he didn't say about Milwood could be printed on the head of a pin! I only got a word here and there, but I guess I got enough. When he got through listin' his shortcomings, believe me, I felt like little Eva, next to that kind of a reputation. He ended up with a pleasant little remark that ran something like this: 'If you've got to get stuck on some one, why don't you pick out a man, not a dirty-fingered crook like him?'

"Then, when she didn't give him no answer to that, he says something I don't catch. Then he flings open the library door; and there was I, balancing on one foot, too late to make a getaway."

"Did he—er—did he attempt to do you bodily harm?" suggested Keeler gently.

Dave's lower jaw shot out vindictively. He ground out his answer through his grimly set, irregular teeth.

"No, he didn't 'attempt'! Why, look at me! I'm all smashed up. But then I forgot you didn't know me when I was natural looking. Don't fret, though. He's going to pay—and pay dear—for every one of these bumps and bruises, no matter how small!"

"Eat!" said Keeler. "You must be hungry."

Dave followed the suggestion with ravenous obedience. For two minutes he ate, without once laying down his fork. Keeler watched. There was nothing to indicate that this man was holding back anything. To all appearances he was spitting out, in an ecstasy of willingness, everything that could be used against the Van Vlecks.

But Keeler knew that there was something more to come. Something that couldn't be forced from the chauffeur. He decided that the only way he could hope to find out would be not to refer to it at all. It was the same spirit that he had employed where, as a child, he had sat moveless on the back-porch steps, after he had been told four times by the cook that he positively could not have any ginger cakes! He had always found that if he sat there long enough and quietly enough, with never another reference to the lovely things, cook would come out and carelessly slip him a few.

The fervency of Dave's appetite began to get on Keeler's nerves. Then suddenly the chauffeur put down his fork, pushed his empty plate into the center of the table, and smacked his lips.

"Great stuff!" he observed.

"So they say," replied Keeler, who had always entertained a rabid aversion to this bizarre dish that we Americans have wished on the Chinese.

As they took their hats from the grinning Celestial at the top of the stairs, the little man said cordially:

"Well, Dave, you've given me a good deal of information. I may be able to use it. I may not. But you haven't told me one thing that I couldn't have found out from some one else—from one of the other servants, for instance. They could have told me of the Van Vlecks' frequent quarrels and their cause. Surely they know as much as you. As to Mrs. van Vleck's presence in the Milwood home last night, I had fastened that fact early this morning—Milwood's Jap man, you know. You haven't given me any mystery news. See what I mean, Dave?"

They were descending the marble steps, their hands sliding along the polished brass rail.

"Mystery, eh?" echoed Dave. "Well, don't you fool yourself. I got a prize little mystery up under my hat, mister. Something nobody knows—something nobody could know very well, except me. Something I wouldn't tell Van Vleck no matter how bad I needed money. See?"

"Good for you! I admire your spunk," commended Keeler.

"Yeh. I wouldn't tell Van Vleck—but I'll tell you."

They stepped from the glass-inclosed vestibule onto the sidewalk. The Broadway crowds were beginning to swarm into the streets. Dave moved up close to Keeler and talked right into his ear.

"It's just this: Last night, when I'd driven a couple of hundred yards away from Milwood's house, I was told to stop the car. *And a woman got out and went back there!*"

"A woman?" echoed Keeler. "Mrs. van Vleck?"

"Woman!" repeated Dave, in drunken secretiveness. "Never mind naming names."

Keeler took hold of his elbow and swung him about violently. Then he looked deep into his eyes.

The man was telling the truth.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SILVER BULLET.

"Let's walk down a little way and get some air," said Keeler hastily. "It's pretty lively around here just at this time."

Dave looked at the little chap with an expression of mingled wonder and contempt. Here was a New York newspaper man extolling the white lights as if he had but lately arrived from Wayville, Illinois. He was afraid that Keeler's next suggestion would be "Let's look in the windows."

The chauffeur was suffering from that peculiar nagging grouch from which the too quickly sobered always suffer. He did not want to walk down Broadway. He did not want to look at people who were bright and happy and bound for a good time. He did not want to encourage mirth within himself.

What did he have to be jovial about? He'd lost his job. He'd been kicked around far more insistently than the hound of popular-song fame. He was entwined in the coils of a murder mystery—and he felt rotten!

The inventory of his "things to be thankful for" was disheartening. And besides that he was saddled with a man who, though a New Yorker and of the press, had the instincts of a tank-town tourist. Although he had taken a vio-

lent fancy to Keeler when semiconscious, the man's neatly cleaned-and-pressed mannerism was beginning to get on Dave's nerves.

He cast about in his still cloudy mind for a plausible reason to "break loose." All he could think of was that his mother didn't know he was going to stay out. But, as he had not had any mother since he was fourteen; and since when he did have her she didn't care whether he went out and forgot to come back or not, he didn't have the nerve to spring it, even on Keeler.

"Everybody looks kind of gay, don't they?" Keeler sighed, with a happy sense of well-being and the love of all mankind.

"Yeh. None of 'em looks like they've had anything happen to spoil their day yet," agreed Dave, indulging in a mental sob at the raciness of the conversation.

"I wonder where all the people get the money to maintain automobiles."

Keeler made the remark as if it were an utterly original foundation for debate.

"I guess they get it left to 'em," Dave filled in, to keep the conversation from lagging.

"Let's stand here a minute and watch the people going to the theater," proposed the little man. "There are so few good plays, aren't there?"

"Oh, I don't know," criticized the other; "the Columbus puts up a pretty good show every once in a while. There was a crackajack there last week—'The Crimson Queens'—it was a riot! In one part the soubrette runs a boarding house for I. W. W.'s, and every time she comes for their board they hand her a bomb and she hotfoots it downstairs. In another part a college boy gets stuck on her, and——

"Ah, yes, there's always a college boy and a soubrette and pale-blue-ribbon ingénue and a brace of Hebrew comedians and a Percy with a wrist watch—isn't there?"

Dave gasped.

"You don't mean to say that you've never been to the Columbus, do you?" he spluttered. "*I* always did, till I got sore when they started to ring in the same companies with the name changed, every three weeks or so. Then I quit."

"Let's go in here for a minute," Keeler steered Dave to the door of a large drug store. "I want to get something."

All the clerks were engaged at the moment, so they hung around the counter, waiting.

"They have very good chocolate-fudge sundaes here." Keeler imparted the information with a shade of gusto. "I really think they're the best in the city. Will you try one on me?"

If some one had offered Dave a cyanide sandwich, he could not have looked more horrified.

"What d'you do with 'em? Smear 'em on your hair?" he came back with the snappy patter.

He waited for the laugh that he was sure must follow. Instead Keeler made a serious retort:

"They're pleasant to the taste, and also very nourishing, due to the chocolate. They are, in fact, not a bad substitute for a meal, if one is rushed for time."

Dave groaned.

"Say, what're you going to get in this joint? A teething ring or a box of talcum?"

"No; I want to telephone."

Keeler walked over to a telephone booth and dropped a nickel. Before central answered, he slid the door shut in its semicircular slot. Then he asked for Riverside 10001.

Lounging against the perfume case, Dave watched him. The conversation of two men, dawdling near the counter, drifted into the chauffeur's meditations. He listened, even though he wasn't particularly interested. They

were evidently discussing some one within their line of vision. Dave's curiosity got the better of him.

"No, that one over there—right in front of you."

"Where? At the cigar counter?"

"No, the little man in the gray tweed suit in the telephone booth. The one with the foolish face—the kind of pleasant, foolish face."

"Oh, that one! Who'd you say he was?"

"Why, he was pointed out to me one night at the Half Moon Club. His name is Wayne Keeler—one of the most brilliant detectives in New York. No man knows it, though, except the men who work right with him. He's a member of the Brooklyn district attorney's staff, you know."

Dave's blood began to congeal, starting at his heart and working outward. Then he mentally kicked himself around the block. Those men were talking about somebody else—another man who was telephoning, most likely. He looked around for another booth. Yes, there was one next to the stack of note paper. But its occupant was a brown-eyed girl, wearing a huge red hat perked at a saucy angle. The two men were still talking.

"I'd never take him for a detective."

"Nobody ever does. Maybe that's one secret of his great success."

"What does he work on?"

"Oh, anything he's assigned to. But his specialty is murder stuff. He has the most uncanny faculty of being able to fasten crimes on people least suspected. A man once said about him that he'd bet Keeler could make an absolutely innocent party appear damned beyond salvation if he wanted to do it. He's a wizard, I tell you—and he looks like an agent for grape juice."

Just then Keeler slid open the door of his booth for some air. He was having some trouble getting his number. He had reached the stage where a person does hysterical things with the hook.

"I said Riverside 10001," he insisted, "and you gave me——" The door closed again.

Dave did not stop to consider. He did not hesitate. With one agile bound he cleared the space between where he stood and the main entrance. Then he sprinted.

Fifteen minutes later, Wayne Wisconsin Keeler, dog-tired and mentally depressed, dragged his weary feet up the front stoop of his boarding house.

In the dark of the vestibule, where no one could see, he rested his head against the outer door for a moment before he fitted his key in the lock.

From the front parlor came the strains of the latest fox trot. The new Third Floor Back was teaching its latest possibilities to the Second Front Hall Room. There was a lingering odor of pot roast floating through the door.

Keeler let himself in. Midway between the parlor and the second floor, a board creaked under his cautious foot. From the basement rose a plaintive voice:

"Mr. Keeler, is that you? Mr. Keeler!"

Above the barber-shop chords and the forced laughter of the dancers, the call rose, insistent. He had hoped for immunity from persecution for just this one night. He was so tired—and there was so much to do.

"If I don't answer and sneak up the rest of the way, maybe she'll think she was mistaken," plotted Keeler.

No such luck. The music had stopped. The Third Floor Back, in a dripping perspiration from his herculean task of a moment before, came out into the hall to stand in the brisk draft at the front door. The Third Floor Back was young enough to get away with that sort of suicide stuff. At the worst, he would have sniffles the next day and wonder how on earth he

got them—when he was "so careful, too"!

Following his example, the horde of young folks trooped out after him. Keeler was discovered.

"Oh, Mr. Keeler, something terrible must have happened!" the blonde with the sparkling green pin in her hair and the putty-colored crêpe de Chine shirt waist exclaimed.

"Is that Mr. Keeler?" rose again from the depths.

"Yes, Mrs. Moody, it is," chorused the "extras."

"Oh, Mr. Keeler! How terrible!"

"Three policemen!"

"It's very important, they said."

The phrases surged up to him where he stood, halfway between the parlor and the second floor. He was confused and provoked.

"You'd better go right around," advised a young man who had thought of studying law but decided to compromise on traveling for a twenty-five-cent-neckwear house. "From the looks of the thing, it must be a pretty urgent matter."

"What?" said Keeler. Then: "When?" And: "How?"

By this time Mrs. Moody had succeeded in working her way to the front row. She came up two or three steps. Keeler noted that she was laboring under a sense of injured pride.

"Oh, Mr. Keeler! What have you done? What terrible thing have you been led into? They've sent three policemen after you!"

"Yes, three!" echoed the mob.

"Where are they?" asked Keeler simply. He spoke as if having three policemen on one's trail was just an ordinary occurrence.

"Why, they're gone!" breathed Mrs. Moody. "You don't suppose for one minute that I'm in favor of having three policemen hanging around my house! What would people think? Why, why, my goodness, they could think almost anything! They went. But they left word that you're wanted around at the station house the minute you come in."

"Then you can be sure I'm not under suspicion of having committed any crime, my dear lady—nor have I disgraced your house. The police are not in the habit of leaving word for crooks to come around and give themselves up, you know."

"Why, Mr. Keeler, the idea! As though I ever called you a crook! Or even told anybody what was in my mind! I was only saying that I'm worried for you, poor boy."

A spasm of fear shook Mrs. Moody's black mercerized moiré. Here was a boarder who paid every Monday, never ate butter on his bread, and went light on red meats. Besides that, he lent caste to the dining room. He was always introduced to guests, company, and new boarders as "Mr. Wayne Keeler, of the district attorney's office." And she had almost insulted the man!

"Maybe a member of your family has gotten into trouble—a black-sheep brother, or even a cousin. I know how those things happen in the tastiest families. If I can do anything at all to aid you, Mr. Keeler, I hope you won't hesitate to call upon me."

"Thank you. But I trust I shan't find it necessary. Will you please give me the message just as you got it, Mrs. Moody?"

Mrs. Moody settled herself for her recital.

"Well, at first a great big policeman came to the basement gate and asked for you. Said you were wanted at the station house. Of course I didn't let him in, so I guess he thought the only polite thing to do was to go away when he wasn't wanted and all.

"Then, not more than twenty minutes later, a little smaller policeman came to the front door with the same message. And about fifteen minutes ago

the third little fellow came and said to be sure to tell you the minute you came in."

Keeler turned to descend the stairs. The hushed throng watched him go—the hero who had three policemen after him!

At the station house the lieutenant greeted him cordially.

"You're in demand over in Brooklyn," he told him. "Chief Pyne, of Poplar Street headquarters, got your address from the Kings County district attorney's office. When he found that the house you lived in had no phone, he called up here and asked at three different times this afternoon for a policeman to be sent around to tell you he wanted to speak to you."

"And the three of them came," smiled Keeler. "I'll call from here, if I may?"

"Certainly! There's a booth over in the corner."

Keeler took down the receiver. The old, nervous excitement burned his cheeks a dull red.

"Poplar Street headquarters!" came to him briskly over the wire.

"Chief Pyne," said Keeler meekly.

"Hello!"

"Hello, chief! This is Keeler."

"Oh, Keeler! Say, have you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"You haven't heard, then? Great news!"

"What?"

"The Jap told everything. Under the third degree."

"Told what?"

"The whole thing. The night session. How Milwood was threatened. Everything!"

"Yes? Well?"

"Say, don't sound so glum! You don't believe in professional jealousy, do you?"

"No. Have any arrests been made?"

"Sure! What do you think we are over here? Say, just because it's Brooklyn, you know, is no reason why you——"

"How many arrests?" interrupted Keeler laconically.

"One, of course. The man who killed him."

"What's his name?"

"Craig."

"Craig!" The receiver rattled sharply against the instrument.

"Yeh. The case is all over. Simple. Come in to-morrow. I'll talk it over with you."

"No!" begged Keeler. "Tell me now! You say you've arrested a man named Craig?"

"Alan Craig. Lives in Washington Square, over in Manhattan."

"On what grounds did you——"

"Ichi made a clean breast of it. He didn't want to talk very much at first. But we ripped it out of him. Pretty soon he was glad enough to jabber."

"And the little liar implicated Craig?"

"Liar nothing! It's straight. Straight enough for an arrest, anyhow. And we'll easy get the rest of the evidence."

"Tell me——"

"Jap swears he heard Craig and Milwood quarreling the evening before the murder. Heard Craig threaten to kill Milwood. Saw Craig go back up to Milwood's study after the other people went home."

"That proves nothing."

"No?" sneered Pyne. "But maybe *this* does: Ichi swears that Craig always wore on his watch chain a funny little charm in the shape of *a silver bullet!*"

"Y-yes?" faltered Keeler.

"Yes!" exulted Pyne. "And Milwood was shot with a silver bullet. Maybe *now* you think we have no grounds for arresting him?"

"Did—did he say——"

"Who? Craig? Won't open his head. Won't even get a lawyer. Won't explain about the bullet or anything. We searched his rooms. No silver bul-

let anywhere there. Good reason! It's in Royce Milwood's head."

"The Jap is lying!" flared Keeler. "Craig never did it. You put Ichi in mortal terror, and he told the first lie that occurred to him to save himself."

"Not a chance!" crowed Pyne. "Not a chance! You're jealous, friend. That's what's the matter with you. Drop over next time you've got a new batch of theories."

CHAPTER XX.

THE HUNT FOR "M. C."

Craig was trying to enjoy a very good cigar in very bad surroundings. On the edge of his shelf bed in his gray-lit cell he sat, smoking, poring dully over the morning paper.

His scarce-tasted breakfast had been taken away. And he faced a day whose unbelievable length can be guessed at by no one who has not been a prisoner. For one entire week Craig had faced such days.

His cigar was as dried maple leaves for flavor. His newspaper held not a word to which his interest could cling. His heart was dead. He was as a man new wounded by a bursting shell—dully aware of his mishap, but with nerves still too numb to feel pain.

It was not fear, it was not remorse that gripped and deadened his every faculty. It was utter grief, a grief that blackened his very soul. At his examination he had refused to testify. He had refused to employ counsel. He had refused to see his friends. For the present, until the machinery of the law should take its next step, he was left pretty much to himself. The "third degree" had left him unscathed. A visit from Keeler had been received in sullen grimness, and the little man's assurances that he was not responsible for the arrest had fallen on deaf ears.

To-day, as on other days, Craig sat waiting—always waiting—for nothing. At last, with a groan of impatience, he laid aside the paper, tossed away the cigar, and threw himself on his cot.

In a cell on the same corridor a "drunk and disorderly" awoke to find his liquid exultation had not been stolen from him by slumber. And he awakened the somber echoes in an improvisation on "Tipperary." The words presumably were his own:

"It's a long way, upon the Erie,
Wherever you go.
It's a long ride and a dreary,
As all commuters know.
Say good-by to comfort.
Just sit back and swear.
It's a long, long ride upon the Erie,
To get anee-where!"

"Can it!" roared an invisible voice of authority.

And the warbler was mute. For a moment silence fell. Then a man in the cell just across the corridor from Craig all at once broke down and began to cry in a strangled medley of coughs and sputtering sobs.

Craig's nerves began to curl. He picked up his paper again and tried to read it. And just then a blue-coated tier turnkey came to order him out. Craig followed the man, neither knowing nor caring whither he might be led.

In the same drugged apathy he let himself be ushered into a dingy "reception room" with barred windows. There he found Keeler awaiting him. Craig halted with a frown. Keeler came forward with smiling cordiality. But Craig ignored the deprecatingly outstretched hand.

"What do you want?" he growled. "Haven't you done harm enough? Can't you let me alone?"

He was well aware that he was speaking like a cross schoolboy, but his wonted cool nerve had been put to undue strain.

"I haven't harmed you, old man," Keeler assured him, speaking as to a fretful baby. "Honest, I haven't. I've

tried so hard to make that clear to you. And, besides, you ought to know me better by this time. I wouldn't harm a fly unless it lit on me when I was trying to get sleep. That isn't kindness, but just because I can't get any fun out of making folks unhappy. Some can. *I* can't."

Craig did not answer, but stood heavy-eyed, listless, uninterested, still unconsciously holding in one flaccid hand the newspaper he had been trying to read when the summons had drawn him from his cell.

"I wish I could say something," went on Keeler, in genuine distress, "to make you believe I don't mean any harm to you—or to any one. Not even to—to whoever did that killing. That's *true*."

"What did you come here for," asked Craig, softening instinctively at the other's appeal, "if you——".

"I came to ask you once more to tell me how to find Miss—or Mrs.—Madge Carr. No, no"—as Craig's face darkened and he turned away—"don't take it like that! And don't shut up like a clam. I tell you, I've *got* to know where she is, and how to find her. I've *got* to! It's for your sake more than any one else's. It'll help clear things up a whole lot, unless I'm very much mistaken. It'll certainly help to get *you* out. You didn't do this crime any more than—than I did. Madge Carr can—— Now tell me where Madge Carr lives."

"Find her yourself!" said Craig gloomily. "You'll get nothing out of me."

"Find her?" echoed Keeler. "D'you suppose I'd have come back here and risked a jawing from you if I hadn't first tried every other way of finding her? I've looked through the city directories and telephone books and called up dozens of Carrs and gone to see dozens more and gotten the cops to ask——"

"You have mentioned her name to—to the police?" gasped Craig, his lips ashen and dry, his apathy gone.

"I didn't tell them why. Anyhow, it didn't do any good. We couldn't find her at any of the Carr addresses in New York or Brooklyn or in the suburbs. There were plenty of Carrs. Carrs to burn. But no one in any of their families was named Madge."

The tenseness in Craig's face lessened.

"Then," pursued Keeler, garrulous in the tale of his vain quest, "I wrote three letters, and addressed each of them to 'Miss—or Mrs.—Madge Carr.' One in Brooklyn, one in New York, and one to New Jersey. The post-office people are awfully good about tracing people that letters are addressed to. But all three letters came back to me stamped 'Not Found.'"

"Give it up, then. It's no concern of yours, or of any one."

"Give it up?" repeated Keeler, in wonder. "Why, man, I can't give a thing up until I've seen it through. Night before last I tried one more move. I put a 'display ad' in the 'Personal' column of the *Chronicle* for yesterday morning. It went something like this: 'If M. C. knows or wants to help Alan C., will she communicate at once with W. W. K., *Chronicle* Office, Box 6447?"

"You put *that* in the *Chronicle?* You little——"

"It didn't do any good. At least, it hasn't yet. I called at the *Chronicle* office yesterday and again on my way here this morning."

"And there were no replies?" said Craig, in visible relief. "Good!"

"Oh, yes," insisted Keeler, with patient literalness, "there were replies."

"What!"

"Yes; three of them. One was a printed form saying the *Diurnal* is a much better advertising medium than the *Chronicle* and I'd get better results by advertising in it. There was a list

of advertising rates inclosed, and some testimonials."

"Oh!"

"Then the second letter was from a man who runs a detective agency in Hoboken. He said that for a twenty-five-dollar retainer and seven dollars a day he would guarantee to find 'M. C.' for me inside of a month. And"—Keeler hesitated and blushed, fidgeting a little—"the third letter was—was almost improper. It was from a person who called herself 'Goo Goo' and who said that as 'W. W. K.' seemed lonely she would be glad to correspond with him. Object, matrimony. It had a picture of her along with it. I seriously doubt, though," he added conscientiously, "if 'Goo Goo' is her real name. It seems such an absurd name for a grown woman. And the woman *was* grown. She had the little lateral lines under her chin, in the picture, that don't come till thirty."

"If there's nothing else you want to pump me about——"

"There is. One thing. You still won't tell me how that silver bullet happened to get out of your possession?"

"No."

"If I'd told the police I found the bullet in the dead man's hand, they would have known it wasn't the bullet that killed him. I didn't tell them. For the fact of its being found in his hand would have been as bad for you, in their eyes, as if you'd really shot him with it. There'd have been the same old story of a struggle and of his snatching it mechanically from you in the death struggle. So I didn't tell. Besides, I'd promised you."

He sighed lugubriously and picked up his soft hat.

"Well, old man," he said, "I wish you'd be sensible and tell me things that would let me help you. But since you won't—— By the way, is that this morning's *Chronicle* you're holding?"

"Yes, I believe it is. Why?"

"I told them to keep on inserting that M. C. ad every day till further orders. Can I have the paper a minute, please? I'd like to see what place they've given it to-day in the 'Personals.'"

Craig handed the paper over to him. Keeler fussed through its labyrinth of crackling pages until he came to one whose third column was headed "Personals."

There he halted, turning the sheet toward the unwashed barred window for better light.

His forefinger ran down the column, then checked itself.

"Here we are!" he said. "Third from the bottom. Might have given it a better showing, I should think. Yesterday it was next to the top. See?"

And in his precise, dry little voice he proceeded to read aloud the advertisement, thrilling slightly at the perusal of his first literary production.

"If M. C. knows or wants to help Alan C., will she please communicate at once with W. W. K., *Chronicle* Office, Box 6447?"

"That ought to fetch her if she sees it," he added, with modest pride. "She can't help knowing who Alan C. is. I wish they'd put it up nearer the top, though, as they did in yesterday morning's paper. I—— *Hello!* Right under it, to-day, there's one beginning ——"

He thrust the paper closer to his eyes. His lips mouthed silent words grotesquely as, over and over, he read something. Craig looked at him, first idly, then in faint surprise. Never in all their lifelong acquaintance had he seen Keeler so profoundly, so hysterically moved.

The little man's face went green yellow and sweat ran down his cheeks. Presently, his wabbly knees refusing to support him, he slumped jarringly into the nearest chair and sat there, panting, as after a hard run.

"It's all up!" he moaned brokenly. "Oh, good Heaven, *it's all up!*"

CHAPTER XXI.

A RABID LAMB.

Craig, dumfounded, roused out of his own dumb misery, watched the writhing Keeler in real concern.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "What ails you?"

Keeler could not reply. Craig strode over to him and took the paper from his nerveless hands. Keeler made a feeble and belated effort to recover it. But already Craig had found the "M. C." advertisement in the "Personals," and, recalling Keeler's half-uttered sentence of "right under it," glanced at the paragraph immediately below. He read:

> To WAYNE WISCONSIN KEELER, whose ad I read in yesterday's Personals: I know who all those initials stand for, including your own, you see. That is all I have to say. M. C.

"She never wrote that!" burst out Craig indignantly, speaking on hot impulse. "She couldn't. It isn't like her."

Keeler, brought back to himself by the sound of Craig's voice, started up, shaking, and, for once in his life, beside himself with anger.

"He'll pay for this!" he shrilled. "Oh, he'll *pay* for it! I might have guessed, but—but how could I dream he'd know? How *could* I? Tell me that! But he'll pay. I was beaten," he raged on hysterically, "clean beaten, though I wouldn't own up to it, even to myself. But I'm not, any more. I'm in this to stay. And I see light, too. Oh, what a fool he was"—rapping the paper fiercely—"to turn back like this to kick a beaten man. I'll let him find out whether the joke's on him or on me. He'll pay for showing me up——"

"He?" queried the bewildered Craig. "Who is *'he'?* Who on earth are you jabbering about? Have you gone daffy?"

Keeler pulled himself together, with a quiver of his whole small body.

"Did—did I say *'he'?"* he faltered, his old meek self once more. "I meant 'she.' Or maybe 'it.' Just forget it, won't you, please, Craig?"

"I think," said Craig, in crass perplexity, "I think this case has turned your brain. Better rest up. By the way"—to lead the talk to what he deemed calmer channels—"I never knew before that the 'W. W.' in your name stood for 'Wayne Wisconsin.' What a queer——"

"Neither did any one else, as far as I know," cried Keeler, his wrath breaking forth anew. "I've guarded it all my life. I'd rather have lost one of my arms than have people get on to that horrible, crazy name. It's been my secret. The secret I've kept hidden the way—the way you're keeping mum about Madge Carr. And for a blamed sight better reason. Because I didn't want to be everybody's laughingstock. It wasn't any one's business, either. Not *any one's!* And now he's let all the world know."

"He?" asked Craig again.

But Keeler shut up and glowered sulkily out of the dirty window. Nor could Craig's gloweringly indifferent efforts wrest another word from him. Presently the little man jammed his hat down over his eyes and slouched out of the room and out of the building.

Napoleon, calm and self-poised at the crisis of Austerlitz, was wont to burst into tears of weakly babyish rage, it is said, when the imperial barber nicked him in shaving. And Keeler, who in all his uneventful life had not twice lost his temper, found himself in a fuming, half-delirious frenzy at this revelation of his shameful name secret. The blow had shaken him to the very soul. Laugh if you will, you who do not know that a tiny life secret or shame is as zealously guarded by its owner as would be a national scandal.

A handful of dry grass burns quite as fiercely as does a prairie fire. And Keeler's rage blazed as hotly as did the betrayed Othello's.

But as he tramped aimlessly across the bridge back to New York, the exercise and the air and his years of calm reasoning gradually concentrated his flaming anger into a single mighty impulse of vengeance.

The methodical clockwork in the back of Keeler's brain was too firmly established in its workings to be shaken by even the direst mental earthquake. Wherefore, even as his purpose of revenge was crystallizing, he found himself instinctively following out the program he had arranged for the day.

From the bridge he dived down into the bowels of the earth and boarded an uptown subway express. A little later he was walking toward the Van Vleck house. He mounted the steps mildly wondering at himself for following out his original routine for the morning, instead of seeking a more alluring road suggested by the advertisement he had read.

The servant who answered the door responded to his almost inaudible query for Mrs. van Vleck—Keeler had mortal cowardice in face of supercilious livery—admitted him to a little reception room, and deigned to take his card. Ignorant of such usages, the visitor could not determine whether the lofty personage's action in admitting him was a sign that Mrs. van Vleck was at home and visible or not. So he nestled uncomfortably on the sharp corner of a spindly chair and waited, hat in hand.

He had clearly mapped out what he wanted to say to Mrs. van Vleck and what he had hoped he might lure her into saying in reply. But the past hour's events had quite unsettled his line of action and had thrown into disarray his neatly drilled cohorts of eloquence. So that the swish of the skirt in the hall outside found him stammeringly unprepared to open battle.

A woman came into the reception room. She was tall, lightly built, decidedly attractive.

Keeler scrambled to his feet, his felt hat squeezed in both hands. It was his first conversation face to face with a woman of her semiexalted class. He did not know what the first move should be. On the stage, at one of his few visits to the theater, he recalled seeing such a grand lady as this sweep into a drawing-room as this woman had just entered. Memory also served to remind him that on the stage one of the characters had greeted her advent by saying:

"Heaven bless your ladyship's bonny face! 'Tis a proud day for us tenantry. Will you condescend to join in our simple revels on the castle lawn?"

Keeler, on memory of this speech, dismissed it at once from the list of possibilities. It did not seem, somehow, to fit the present crisis. Instead, he bobbed his head jerkily, clutched his hat tighter, and, in a burst of loquacity, whispered hoarsely:

"How do?"

Meantime the woman had come straight toward him; not at all like the haughty countess in the play, but with a rather winsome smile and with her right hand outstretched.

"Mr. Keeler," she said, before the guest could make up his mind to release his hat long enough to touch her proffered hand, "I am so glad to see you! I've been trying so hard to find you."

She spoke with a quick earnestness and with a sincerity and warmth that were unmistakable.

"Trying to find *me?*" he echoed. "But I've called——"

"And," she went on, "not ten minutes ago, I wrote to you."

"Wrote to *me?*" he gasped, parrotwise.

"Yes. At least, I was certain it was to you."

"I—I don't understand, Mrs.——"

"Wasn't it your personal in this morning's *Chronicle?* I happened to notice it half an hour ago. I don't generally see the personals. But, as I was turning over the pages, my eye happened to light on such a funny—I mean such an unusual—name, 'Wayne Wisconsin Keeler.' And I——"

She checked herself momentarily, for she saw the man flinch as though he had been cut by a dog whip. Then, as he gave no further sign of distress, she seemed to assume that his action was due to some nervous affection, and she continued:

"So I read the personal that began with your name. It didn't make any sense to me. For I didn't associate it with the Mr. Keeler I had heard of. But it was odd, and it interested me because there seemed to be a mystery behind it. And so I read the other personals in the column to see if I could find any more that were interesting. And right above the one I'd first read I came upon a personal *you* must have written. Though I don't quite see how it could have been in the same edition as the one underneath that was an answer to it."

"I had it printed yesterday, too. So the——"

"I see. Well, I read it. And when I came to the part about 'Alan C.,' I knew it must be you who wrote it. So I sat down to answer it. *Why* did you ask——"

"How can the personal interest you?" he demanded, breaking in bewilderedly. "Unless you can by any chance give me the address I want. I—I believe you *can!*" he cried, in sudden hope. "What a ninny I was not to think of it sooner! You and she were both friends of Milwood."

"I and—who?"

"Mrs. van Vleck," he asked eagerly, "can you tell me where or how to find a Miss—or Mrs.—Ma——"

"Pardon me," she interposed, "I am not Mrs. van Vleck. She is out. That is why I chanced to see your card. I thought——"

"Not Mrs. van Vleck?" he almost groaned. "Am I never to see her?"

"But I gathered that it was *I* you wanted to see. I thought, from the ad——"

"You? Why, I don't even know who you are."

"I am Madge Carr. Mrs. van Vleck is my sister."

CHAPTER XXII.

REVELATIONS.

Keeler stared, bottle-eyed, at her for a full half minute, his gaze as starkly imbecile in its astonishment as though he had just seen the girl change into a coach and four. Then he spoke.

"No," he said, very decidedly, "that can't be. Luck wouldn't come over to my side like that. Not so suddenly. I hate to contradict you, Miss Carr. I mean Miss Somebody. But it can't be——"

He caught himself up, realized he was thinking aloud, and that she must think him a blithering idiot, and regained some sort of control over himself.

"Excuse me," he begged. "I—I wasn't quite prepared for you. You see, I've been looking and advertising so——"

"And I've been trying just as hard to get hold of you. But all I could find out about you was that your name was Keeler and that you came to see Mr. Craig just before he was arrested, and that he seemed excited and miserable after you had gone. I got that from the hallboy at the apartment house where he lives—lived. I didn't think so much of it till I said to Mr. Craig that I'd heard of your call on him and

I asked if you had anything to do with the case. He snapped out: 'He has *everything* to do with it.' Then he fell back into that horrible silence again and wouldn't say another word. But I wanted to find you, to see if you knew anything that could clear matters up, or if your visit to him had anything to do with his arrest or——"

"It hadn't. He is a friend of mine. I wanted to help him. He won't let me."

"He won't let *me*, either," she complained. "He wouldn't even *see* me of his own accord when I went to that prison place over there. I had to tip an attendant to get me an interview with him. He seemed to shrink from me. He wouldn't talk at all, except to beg me never to go there again. Oh, it is so *horrible!* I hear he won't make any explanations to the police, either; and he won't even hire a lawyer. *What* do you make of it?"

"Forgive me if I am impertinent," said Keeler, regaining strength and composure under the piteousness of his appeal. "But I want to ask you some questions. Will you answer them? Beforehand, let me say I'm Craig's friend, that I *know* he isn't guilty, and that your help may give me a chance to set him free. I'm in the district attorney's office, but I'm working on this case as a free lance. I won't repeat anything you may say. Will you answer my questions?"

Her big, dark eyes were fixed on his own mild blue orbs, and she was reading deep into his very soul. What she read satisfied her. For, on impulse, she made reply:

"Yes, I'll tell you everything I know about it. Gladly."

"Good! First—you won't be offended?—why did Craig and Milwood quarrel about you?"

"About *me?* Did they?"

"Yes; the evening of Milwood's dinner. Milwood wanted Craig to go in with him on some crooked deal. Craig refused. Then, a little later, Craig, as far as I can gather, seemed to be threatening Milwood, because Milwood said something about you. I—of course, I don't know whether Craig had any right to——"

"He had every right he chose to take. We love each other."

"Oh, excuse me!" muttered Keeler, as distressedly as if he had chanced to blunder into her bedroom. "I didn't mean——"

"Mr. Craig and I are engaged," she continued, with perfect frankness. "It is not announced. We became engaged only a day or two before he was arrested. That is why I went to his apartment to inquire about him, when he didn't answer any of my telephone calls, the morning after the murder. I was afraid he might be ill. That was why I was so determined to see him at headquarters, and why I bribed my way to him. I *had* to see him. He was in trouble, and he needed me. He needed me terribly at such a time. But when I saw him, he—he would hardly speak to me. I—I don't know——"

"And Milwood?" Keeler mustered courage to ask. "Was he in—in love with——"

"With *me?* Why, no; he—of course he wasn't. I'm certain. I have every reason to know."

"Then it wasn't that kind of a quarrel?"

"It couldn't have been."

"But why else should two men quarrel about you?"

She did not answer at once, and seemed to be pondering. Presently she said:

"I think I can imagine."

"Please."

"It is rather a long story. I'll make it as short as I can. My father is quite ill. His health broke down through money worries and through dreading that he might be disgraced in the finan-

cial world. The doctors said that if his cause for worry—*they* didn't know what it was—could be taken away, he might get well."

"But the quarrel between Craig and Milwood," suggested Keeler, trying to lead her back from a supposed digression.

"I'm coming to that. Mr. Milwood had induced my father to become an investor in some of his schemes and to lend the use of his name and influence to them. Father thought they were honest and aboveboard, of course——"

"Of course," assented Keeler mechanically.

"When he found they weren't, and when he found in what peril he stood, it broke him down. He is old and he's not strong. Not only his own money is mixed up in it, and the money of people who invested on his advice, but most of the inheritance left me by my grandmother, and some of my sister's money, too."

"I'm so sorry."

"It's all right. If it goes, it goes. People have lived happily without much wealth. It isn't the money we've been so unhappy about. It's father."

"'We?'"

"My sister and I."

"Mrs. van Vleck? Oh!"

"That was why we went to Mr. Milwood's dinner."

"Because he had cheated your father?" asked Keeler, puzzled, ashamed of himself for so silly a question and looking doubly deprecating after he had asked it.

"Yes," she said. "Indirectly. My sister had written to him to ask for an interview. She and he knew each other well. And she thought she might persuade him to release father from the hideous tangle. Mr. Milwood wrote inviting us to dinner, saying he and Mrs. van Vleck could get a chance for a private chat that evening."

"They did."

"What did you say?"

"Nothing. Go on. But you said a while ago you could guess why Milwood and Craig mentioned your name in their quarrel."

"Yes, I was coming to that. You said Mr. Milwood wanted Alan to join him in some dishonest deal, and Alan refused, and then they quarreled and my name was used. It would have been like Mr. Milwood to hint covertly that unless Alan consented to do as he wished he would wreck my little fortune. It was in his power. And he probably thought that Alan, caring for me, might be brought to terms by such a hint. I don't wonder Alan was angry and threatened him."

"And you think that was the cause of the quarrel?"

"I can't think of any other explanation for it."

"Milwood knew Craig cared for you."

"Probably. He had seen us together often enough."

"H'm!" commented Keeler, only partly convinced.

"Can you think of any better theory?"

"No."

"They arrested Alan because the Japanese servant swore he heard the quarrel, the papers said. Was that enough pretext for so outrageous an arrest?"

"No," returned Keeler, "it wasn't. That wasn't all the Jap told the police."

"But the papers said——"

"The rest of the Jap's statement was kept from the reporters, for some reason best known to Pyne. Ichi also said that he'd seen Craig wearing a queerly mounted silver bullet on his watch chain. And, you remember, the victim was shot with a silver bullet."

"I remember. I read it. But I didn't connect it with—it *wasn't* the same silver bullet Alan used to wear on his watch chain," she declared, with sudden positive assurance.

"I know it wasn't. I have every rea-

son to know it. But how do *you* know it, Miss Carr?"

She seemed startled by the suddenness of the little man's question. She hesitated, then she said slowly:

"Because Alan was not wearing the silver bullet on his watch chain that night—if he wore a watch chain at all. Because he didn't have the bullet in his possession at that time."

"He didn't?" asked Keeler, atremble. "What makes you think that?"

"Because," she answered, her eyes calmly meeting his, "he had lent it to me two days earlier."

"Lent you his watch charm?" asked Keeler, although he saw she was telling the truth. "Why should he do a thing like that?"

"Because I'm silly enough to be superstitious. So is Alan. He was calling here one evening, a couple of days before the murder. I was looking at the bullet, and I asked him where he got it. It was such a queer thing—a silver bullet. He told me Mr. Milwood had picked it up, among a lot of other odd curios, somewhere in Europe or in the East, and had given it to him. I believe he told him the silver bullets used to be made with strange ceremonies, and were blest, too. Alan said, the very day he got it, he had a raise in salary and the next week he recovered a debt he had supposed was hopeless. So he looked on the bullet as a mascot and had it mounted and hung on his watch chain. He told me it was always bringing him good luck."

"Well?"

"Well, father's affairs and ours were at their worst just then. And the foolish notion came to me that perhaps a mascot would improve our own luck. So I asked Alan to lend it to me for a while. He took the bullet off his watch chain and snapped the fastening of its ring around this thin gold bracelet I always wear."

"He did? Then—— By the way, he knew of your family's trouble with Milwood, I suppose?"

"No, I decided not to tell him. In the first place, he and Mr. Milwood were old acquaintances and seemed to like each other. I didn't want to cause trouble between them—certainly not until we had made sure Mr. Milwood was not going to be man enough to help my father out of the trouble he had gotten him into. And, besides, father had begged us not to tell any outsider about the affair. He dreaded its being known."

"I see. And now—if I'm not tiring you—to go back to the silver bullet. What did you do with it?"

"I lost it."

"Lost it? Have you any idea where?"

"Either at Mr. Milwood's or on my way home."

"You are sure?"

"Yes. At dinner that night it caught in the lace insertion of the tablecloth. I remember Alan disentangling it for me. He sat at my left. And when I got home I noticed it was gone. The fastening had come open."

Keeler got up nervously and began to walk up and down.

"So, now," continued Miss Carr, in sudden inspiration, "we can go to the police and I'll tell them my story about the bullet. That will clear Alan from any possibility of having shot——"

"No," dissented Keeler. "I'm afraid not. But—but I begin to see several things much more clearly. At least, I'm quite certain I do. Very clearly, indeed."

"But *why* won't it help Alan to have me tell?" she persisted.

"Be patient with me a few minutes more, please," he entreated, "and I'll tell you. I've still one or two questions to ask you, if you'll let me."

"Certainly," she replied, her earnest sincerity unmistakable. "I want to help. Oh, I *do* want to help him!"

"And you're doing it by every word

you speak," he said gratefully. "Please believe that. Lord! If I could have met you the day after the murder! First—you and Mrs. van Vleck dined at Milwood's. Some of you played cards or had music or something downstairs after dinner. One or two others went up singly to Milwood's study to talk to him. Do you know who some of the people were who went up?"

"Is it really necessary?" she asked, with visible reluctance, "for me to tell you that?"

"Miss Carr," he answered, with a quite phenomenal burst of eloquent metaphor, "in this case everybody seems to be trying studiously to strike the wrong clews. Everybody except myself. And the only reason I happen to be on the right path—or on one of two right paths—is because I know something—a big something—that nobody else knows. Just before I came here this morning I was going to give up looking for the other of the 'two right paths,' and follow the path I was on to a very quick ending. But seeing you has given me a better idea. You've set me on the second path now. I'm only at the outset of it. But I'd be miles away from finding it at all if it hadn't been for you. And but for you I can't take a step along the path you've helped me find. *Won't* you help me? On my honor, you won't regret it. For it's a path that leads to Craig's freedom, among other things. To his exoneration, too. Say, Miss Carr, I'm no good at making speeches or persuading ladies to do anything they don't want to. But—but——"

"I will tell you anything I know," she broke in, with a new decision. "You ask who some of the people were who went up to Mr. Milwood's study that night. Several people left the living room, for one reason or another, from time to time. I didn't notice who they were. I was playing auction at the time. But later I found out who *one* of them was. She told me. It was my sister."

"Mrs. van Vleck?"

"Yes. I knew our reason for going to the dinner was so she could have a private talk with Mr. Milwood. As I told you. But I didn't see her leave the room. It was only when we were getting into our car that she told me she had had the talk."

"She told you——"

"You have promised never to repeat what I say."

"I have," he panted eagerly. "She told you——"

"She told me she went to beg him to help my father. And—and that he made shameful love to her. He—oh, it is vile to have to repeat such things of a man who is dead!—he said he would reinstate my father if—if she would run away with him."

She spoke with head averted, every word forced from her lips by manifest effort.

"Good!" thought Keeler, exultant, even while he fairly wriggled with bashful distaste for discussing such a theme with a young girl. "Good! She's been telling the truth all along. This proves it. Poor thing!"

Aloud he ventured:

"So your sister told you that?"

"Yes; as we got into the car and started off. I—I was so indignant, so sorry for her, so disappointed at her failing to help father, that I did a very rash and very wrong thing."

"Please," he protested, the vital facts arrayed in full before him, as he thought; and, unwilling to torture her further, "Please don't go on if it makes you unhappy."

But, unheeding, she continued:

"On a crazy impulse, I ordered the chauffeur to stop. I had made up my mind to speak to Mr. Milwood myself. To make one last wild plea to him. I see now how useless it was. But it meant everything to me."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DIVINE LIE.

"You—you mean you went *back?*" exclaimed Keeler. "You mean—oh, you surely don't mean it was *you* who got out of the car and went back into Milwood's house?" gurgled Keeler.

"Yes; I was almost beside myself. My sister implored me not to. I wouldn't listen to her. The front door was still open. The Japanese servant was holding it ajar for a man who came down the front stairs—from the study, for all I know—as I reached the veranda. It was Alan Craig."

"Craig? He went up to the study, then, after the guests left?"

"I suppose so. We—Mrs. van Vleck and I—had been the last to go. I hadn't seen Alan to say good night to him. I supposed he had gone until I saw him come down the steps and out through the front door."

"He saw you?"

"Yes, he stopped me. But I told him I was going to the dressing room for something I had left. I didn't dare tell him the truth. I knew if I did he wouldn't let me go up there at that time of night to talk with Mr. Milwood. He asked if he couldn't get what I wanted for me. I said no. And then he told me I was as white as a ghost and that I was trembling. And he asked if I were ill. I laughed—or I tried to—and I told him I was all right, and not to be silly, and I said good night to him and waited till I heard him go down the veranda steps. Then I asked the Japanese to take me up to Mr. Milwood's study."

"All alone, and——"

"I tell you I was frantic about father. And I'm forever doing foolishly rash things. I went up there. Mr. Milwood must have heard me on the stairs, for he met me at the study door. I don't clearly remember just what I said to him. But I remember pleading with him to save father from disgrace. I almost went on my knees to him. And oh, how I hated myself to have to beg favors from such a man! I hated him—*hated* him—for the way he had just behaved toward my sister. At last he said he'd think it over and let me hear from him the first thing in the morning. So I came away. There was at least that crumb of comfort to offer my sister. There!" she finished. "That is all. You—you despise me, don't you?"

"Despise you?" he repeated, almost reverently. "I—I think you're—you're—I don't know the right word. You're splendid! But," he added, "you're wrong when you say that's all. That's only just the beginning."

"It *is* all, Mr. Keeler!" she insisted. "Honestly it is. We came straight home and I went to bed. I was so exhausted I went to sleep at once. I didn't even hear Mr. van Vleck come home. Next morning at breakfast I read about the murder. And——"

"You misunderstood me," he hastened to say, in almost frightened apology. "I didn't mean you hadn't told me everything you knew about. You did. I'm certain of that. I meant there is much, *much* more to tell. But it's not by you. Let me thank you with all my heart for telling me all this. And now, in return, I'll tell *you* something: I can explain why Craig has taken this thing the way he has; why he shut up so, why he didn't want me to find you, or you to find me; and why he didn't want to see you when you went to headquarters. I can explain all that from what you've been telling me."

"But how? What I've told you was only my own——"

"It was Craig's part, too. Brace yourself for something of a shock, Miss Carr. And forgive me beforehand for having to say this——"

"What?"

"Craig thinks you killed Milwood."

"Alan—Alan Craig thinks *that?* Oh, you are mad!"

"No," asserted Keeler, "I'm sane. Craig believes you killed Milwood. That is why he won't deny the crime, why he won't retain counsel, why he looks as if his whole life was broken."

"Alan Craig could never, *never* believe such a horrible thing about me!" she flashed. "I won't listen to such a——"

"He does believe it," doggedly persisted Keeler. "And, to shield you, he is risking his own life. He is prepared to take the blame on his own shoulders to save you. If suspicion should point toward you, I verily believe he would confess to save you. It would be a lie, of course. But it would be a divine lie."

She was listening to him, wide-eyed, incredulous, well-nigh stupefied with amazement. But she found breath to say:

"Will you please explain, if you can, what twist of brain leads you to think that Alan Craig can possibly believe for one instant that the girl to whom he is engaged could possibly sink to such a crime?"

"Perhaps," suggested Keeler shamefacedly, "perhaps he thinks you *rose* to it. There are some forms of homicide that are as praiseworthy as to put a mad dog out of the way."

"I—I don't understand you at all," she murmured, in utter perplexity.

"No? I'll try to explain. Craig saw you go back into Milwood's house late at night, just as he was leaving. After all the other guests had left. He saw you were deadly pale and shaking all over. Next morning he read that Milwood had been found, a little later, murdered. Craig knew you were perhaps the last person, except possibly the Jap, who saw him alive, if you saw him at all."

"And you think, on *that* flimsy thread of evidence, Alan would suspect me?"

"No, I don't. Though it would set him to thinking, to worrying. And it did. When I went to see him in the morning, he was sick with worry."

"But——"

"Then," proceeded Keeler, "I showed him the silver bullet. The one he had lent you. The one he had seen on your bracelet at the Milwood dinner."

"You—*you* showed him the bullet? But how did you ever——"

"The minute he set eyes on it he was struck all of a heap. He was on the point of telling me about his going back to Milwood's study after his quarrel. But when he saw the bullet, he shut up. He threw the thing into the fire and ordered me out of his rooms."

"But where did *you* find the bullet?" she asked once more, in crass astonishment.

"I found it," said Keeler, with slow solemnity, "in the dead man's hand. And I told Craig so."

"In his hand? In Mr. Milwood's hand?" she babbled, aghast. "But——"

"And now, Miss Carr, you know why Craig thinks you did the killing. And you know he *does* think it."

"In his hand!" she kept repeating vacantly. "But I lost it in——"

"I know you did. I know perfectly well you did. You are as innocent as Craig is or as I am."

"But how could the bullet have gotten——"

"I think I know. I have thought so all along. And now I am practically certain."

"Tell me."

"I can't—yet. Very soon I can tell you and every one else; including my wise friend, the chief of detectives. Or, better still, I believe I can make the person who put that silver bullet in the dead man's hand tell it himself."

"The person? Who?"

"The person I'm looking for, Miss Carr. Thanks to you, the 'two paths' I spoke about have at last merged into one. A very few more turnings of that

path, and I believe I'll be at its end. I'm sorry I haven't the right to say any more just now. Good-by. I won't wait to see Mrs. van Vleck. There's no reason any more for my seeing her."

"But what am I to do?" she protested. "How can I let Alan go on thinking that I——"

"You can't. You can't let him go on thinking anything of the sort. Here!"

He scribbled a few lines in his neat, cramped little handwriting on the back of one of his cards and handed it to her.

"A note to my friend, Chief Pyne, at detective headquarters," he explained. "Present that, and the chief will see you have an audience with Craig—alone. Tell Craig you didn't commit the murder. Tell him I say so, and that I know who *did* commit it. And that I'll have the murderer trapped inside of one week at the very most. Tell him, too, just why you went back to see Milwood and all that happened. Unless I'm mistaken, Alan Craig will sleep better to-night than he has in a long while. That is, if he believes you."

"*Believes* me?" echoed the girl, from far deeper knowledge of nature. "Why, he *loves* me!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

ANOTHER HOPEFUL SUSPECT.

Keeler turned to go. Pausing at the door, he methodically drew out a somewhat soiled sheet of paper and a pencil. Opening the paper, he crossed off two names—the names of Mrs. van Vleck and her husband.

"If you need me for anything, at any time, in connection with the case—which you probably won't," he said, "I am employed in the district attorney's office, as I told you. I go back to work there in a few days. And," he added, under his breath, "you can thank your lucky stars, young lady, that Ichi didn't happen to know your name and *did* happen to know Craig's. Otherwise you'd have been a much likelier suspect for him to lay the blame on."

"Good-by," Madge Carr was saying. "And I thank you more than I can say."

He bowed himself awkwardly out of the room—and against some one who had just come into the house and was passing down the wide hall.

Overcome with confusion, he whirled about, stammering apology to a large woman of the Junoesque type. She stared in no great favor at the somewhat shabbily clad little visitor. Madge, who had followed Keeler to the doorway of the reception, threw herself into the breach to relieve the man's squirming embarrassment.

"Mr. Keeler, you wanted to see my sister," she said, with intentional informality. Then, to the large woman: "This is Mr. Keeler, of the district attorney's office."

Keeler was struck by the ludicrously sudden change which swept over Mrs. van Vleck's face.

Mrs. van Vleck became positively ghastly. The full curves of her figure seemed to shrink. She looked at Keeler as might a rabbit at a boa constrictor.

That so large and palpably self-assured a woman should, in her own house, bestow such an abjectly terrified stare upon meek little Keeler was quite unbelievable. Keeler bowed gawkily, and began to shuffle backward toward the front door.

At his first move, Mrs. van Vleck recovered herself sufficiently to bleat nervously:

"From—from the district attorney's office, did you say?"

Prompted by a quick impulse, Keeler answered, in a tone that he tried to pattern after Chief Pyne's:

"Yes, Mrs. van Vleck, from the district attorney's office. In connection with the Milwood murder case."

A gurgling, wordless noise issued from Mrs. van Vleck's lips—lips that had all at once turned yellowish-white,

along with the rest of her face. She glared with glassy-eyed fascination at him. Then, before either Madge or Keeler could speak, she braced herself, and, still keeping her twitching face averted from her sister, forced out the words:

"Madge, I—I sent to ask Mr. Keeler to come here this morning. I wanted to see him—to see him on a very important matter. Would you mind leaving us alone together for a few minutes?"

Wondering at this new tone of her usually well-poised sister, Madge made as though to speak. Then, catching Keeler's eye and reading its request, she turned and went upstairs, leaving the little man and Mrs. van Vleck confronting each other.

Mrs. van Vleck, with steps that actually tottered, led the way back into the reception room, the puzzled Keeler following. Once inside the room, she collapsed into a chair and looked up with sodden hopelessness at him.

"Madam," began Keeler, still striving to speak majestically, "you told Miss Carr you had sent for me. Why did you say that?"

"To—to get her out of the way. I don't want her to know till—till she must. I understood why you had come as soon as she said 'from the district attorney's office.' You didn't tell her anything about——"

"No."

"I've been waiting—and dreading this——"

"If you will be frank with me, Mrs. van Vleck," he urged, in his best Chief Pyne voice, "you will find it greatly to your advantage."

Keeler was delighted at his own hitherto unsuspected gifts as a bully; though, with his wontedly precise self-knowledge, he realized he could not have mustered the assurance to speak thus to any one who was not badly frightened. He judged that Mrs. van Vleck, in her normal state of mind, would have awed him into scared silence by a single look—even as could his horrible landlady.

But the woman was far too frightened to note the spuriousness of his majestic tone.

"I am waiting," he said loftily, as she fought for words.

"What—what do you want to know?" she whimpered.

"Pray don't dodge the issue, madam," he retorted. "I think you understand quite well what I came here to learn."

This was a case where the wish was father not only to the thought, but to the hope as well. Keeler was all at sea. But for the woman's manifest terror, on learning whence he came, and upon what business, he would not have dreamed of suspecting anything amiss. Indeed, she was already crossed off his list. He was conducting the interview at a mere venture, hoping to discover he knew not what.

"It will be wiser for you—and better for every one else concerned," he continued sternly, "to begin at the beginning and tell me everything. *Everything,*" he repeated, clearing his throat and looking upon her in cold suspicion. "I will even stretch a point," he added, "and promise that if you will be wholly open and aboveboard with me, I will not report to my office any confession you may make."

Too frightened to note the glaring inconsistency of his pledge, the woman sighed in relief.

"I will tell you," she said shakily.

"Pray do!" he barked.

"I dined at Mr. Milwood's on——"

"I know all that," said Keeler, with a fine show of impatience. "I also know every word of the interview you had with him in his study. Why you went there and the alternative he offered you. Proceed from that point."

"We came home," she said unsteadily "About half an hour later, Mr. van Vleck returned from the business trip

he had been on. He found me crying. He insisted on my telling him why. I didn't mean to tell. I tried not to. But he wrung the truth out of me. He—my husband—is a very determined man. He flew into the most fearful rage I ever saw, and he——"

"Yes, yes! Go on!"

"He swore he would kill Mr. Milwood for daring to make——"

"To make love to you," brusquely amended Keeler, marveling at his own brazenness. "I know all that. Go on!"

In growing astonishment at this man who seemed to know everything, she blundered ahead.

"He said he would kill Milwood. And he said that no jury on earth that heard the story would convict him for doing it. Then he left the house."

"Ah! Taking a pistol along?"

"I—I don't know. I suppose he must."

"He had a pistol in the house?"

"A pistol? *A* pistol? He must have had forty. He has picked them up all over the world, just as Mr. Milwood used to. He got the idea of the pistol-collecting fad from Mr. Milwood when they were associated in business together years ago. He has all types of pistols, from the earliest makes to the latest. I hate the sight of them. They always frighten me. So he keeps them put away in a case in the library."

"Did any of them shoot silver bullets?"

"I don't know what they shoot!" she exclaimed irritably.

Feeling that her fear was giving place to crossness, Keeler cleared his throat ponderously and declaimed:

"I will hear the rest of your story, madam. He left the house. Well?"

"I watched for him till he came back. It was a quarter of six in the morning when he got in. He was soaked with rain and mud-stained, and his boots were thick with mire. I didn't dare question him then. And he hadn't a word to say. Afterward, when I read the account of the murder, I—I——"

"And he has never touched on the subject since then?"

"Never! And—and I've been afraid to. But every minute I've been dreaming that one of you policemen would come——"

"I can set your dread at rest for the moment," said Keeler. "He will not be arrested yet. Perhaps not at all. Good day!"

He quitted the house abruptly. In the street he carefully rewrote the crossed-off name of Van Vleck on his "suspected list."

"As soon as I get this thing all straight in my mind," he muttered plaintively, "some one has to come along and tangle it all up again. But"—with renewed optimism—"the *next* step's plain, anyhow."

CHAPTER XXV.

CAT AND MOUSE.

Half an hour later, Keeler walked into Chief Pyne's private office at detective headquarters in Brooklyn. The chief looked up with a pleasant grin. He had grown to like the modest little chap who had so odd a gift for "seeing things." And, despite the fact that Keeler's earlier discoveries in the case had not been followed by complete triumph, the chief nourished a great, if unwilling, respect for the man's judgment.

"Well, Mr. Keeler?" he hailed him jovially. "Back already, hey? I hoped you'd blow in here again, after our chat with Craig. But when I asked about you, you'd gone. Got anything new?"

"Yes, sir," replied Keeler apprehensively. "I've got a big favor to ask of you. And I don't like to, for fear you'll turn me down."

"Anything short of my pay slip," the chief assured him largely. "Pin a label on it, and it's yours. Spiel away. How much?"

"If one of your prisoners was turned loose——" began Keeler evasively.

"I'm sorry you're at that subject again," grumbled the chief. "I won't stir one finger to help you in your crazy idea of getting Craig out. He's as guilty as—as Benedict Arnold."

"He is as innocent as you are," retorted Keeler, with unexpected spirit. "And I'm going to prove it mighty soon now. But, chief, you're barking up the wrong tree. I'm not talking about Craig."

"Who *are* you talking about, then?"

"One moment! If you were to turn loose one of your prisoners, and if you tipped off two or three of your best men beforehand to be on the watch for him as he left here and to follow him wherever he went, keeping close to him but not letting him know he was trailed—what chance would that prisoner have of making a clean get-away?"

"What chance? About as much as Craig has of getting acquitted."

"I'm sorry. For the sake of my plan. Because Craig is going to be acquitted. Or, rather, he's going to be set free long before his trial."

"Don't let's jaw over that," laughed the chief. "You were talking about the old cat-and-mouse trick. It's been tried a hundred times. Setting a man loose, trailing him to some pal of his that we want to locate, and then nabbing the two of them. It's old stuff."

"How often does such a prisoner give your men the slip?"

"He doesn't. He never does. In books maybe. Not in the New York detective force. Why, how could he? We turn him loose, him not suspicioning a thing. See? And a handful of men who've been trained to such work for years shadow him. What chance has he? The chance of the good old tallow dog chasin' the asbestos cat through hell. He's *gotta* get caught."

"You don't think you're running a risk, then, of losing a prisoner that way?"

"When the boys are tipped off and waiting, no."

"Then," pursued Keeler, "we come to the favor I was working up my nerve to ask you. About an hour from now will you turn Ichi loose?"

"Turn the Jap loose! Why?"

"Under your usual cat-and-mouse terms. He ought to be easy to follow. And any one of your men is strong enough to catch him again."

"But what's the main idea?"

"If I tell you," responded Keeler, hesitating, "will you give me your word to do as I ask? Or, at any rate, will you promise me, on your word of honor, not to interfere with what I am going to try to do?"

The chief thought for a moment, then answered:

"You're on. I can't be overlooking any bet on getting myself in bad by a promise like that. I won't butt in on your game whatever it is. And, if you can show me a good reason for turning Ichi loose for an hour or two, I'll do that, too. Fire away!"

Hitching his chair close to the chief's desk, Keeler began to speak in a low-pitched, confidential tone. At first his words came haltingly, almost incoherently. But as he warmed to his theme he talked faster and with the quiet authority of a man who knows he is in the right.

Chief Pyne's face, as he listened, was a study—first of dawning interest, then of amazement, then of frank and grinning incredulity. But finally, as Keeler talked, the mocking grin faded from the detective chief's mouth and eyes, and was replaced by a look of almost blank irresolution. When Keeler had finished, the chief sputtered:

"I don't believe a word of it. You're dippy!"

But he said it without the slightest conviction, half defiantly, half doubt-

fully. Keeler made no answer. He was satisfied. Presently, with a grunt of surrender, Pyne blurted out:

"You're ripe for the foolish house. And so am I for helping you. But I've got a hunch. And I'm going to follow it just for a flyer. Go ahead. I'll let Ichi loose in an hour, and tell three of the slickest boys to shadow him and to grab him when the time comes. Will three be enough?"

"For Ichi alone they'll be more than enough. Yes, they'll be enough for—for any emergency, I think."

"So do I. And to make things surer I'll send a hint to the central office, in Manhattan, to look out for——"

"No. You gave me your word not to interfere."

"Oh, all right!" growled the chief. "And, anyhow, the whole idea's bug-house. I'm not keen on being laughed at. I won't say anything."

"Not even to the men who are to trail Ichi," exhorted Keeler. "Just tell them to have him followed, and, when I give the word, to take him."

"If he's where you are so you can 'give the word,'" answered Pyne. "Which it's fifty to one he won't be."

"Will you wager fifty dollars to one on that?" asked Keeler.

"N-no, I won't. But it's so. All right, then, Mr. Keeler. Trot along. And in an hour I'll tell Ichi we've decided to let him go, because we believe he won't try to give us the slip when he's wanted to testify. Good luck. But—oh, it's a fool idea!"

"If it was a fool idea, chief," said Keeler pleasantly, "or if you really thought it was a fool idea you wouldn't go in on it."

"I'm not going in on it," hastily disclaimed Pyne. "I'm letting *you* go ahead with it—as—as a favor to you. Just as I might buy my kid a popgun to shoot bears in Borough Hall. And—speaking of guns—you're heeled, of course?"

"Heeled?"

"You carry a gun, don't you?"

"A gun? A pistol? Oh, dear, no. Of course not."

"You—you mean you're horning into that mix-up without a gat! Here, take this along."

He pulled from a drawer a squat, black automatic. Keeler backed hurriedly away from the ugly weapon.

"No," he stammered. "Please. No. I—I don't want it. It might go off. I never handled one."

"Well, I'll be——" ejaculated Chief Pyne. "You're the bravest coward I ever ran up with. Or the sissiest hero. I ain't sure which."

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The final installment of this novel will appear in the issue on sale July 7th.

NO ALTERNATIVE

A WELL-KNOWN politician of one of our Southern States wanted to reward his negro servant for his unfailing good humor in performing his chores.

"Jim," he said, "you have been pretty faithful to me for the past eight years, and I want to give you something for a Christmas present that will be useful to you and that you will enjoy. Which do you prefer, a ton of coal or a jug of good whisky?"

"Well, boss," Jim replied, "Ah burns wood."

Deegan's Moment

By H. C. Witwer

Make the acquaintance of Thomas S. Cleary. The "S." in his name stood for "Sleepless." A very wideawake boomer, whose nerve was as remarkable as his appearance

DO I know Tommy Cleary? Does Wilson know Bryan? Say, I put that Cleary guy in th' show business. Pretty soft for him now, eh? I guess that bird gets more dough a week than Billy Sunday—comes easier, too. But he's a clever boy, Tommy is; he always was. If he hadn't been I guess he'd still be ahead of "Madame Gray's Revenge," wildcattin' all over th' well-known West an' points adjacent for bean money an' th' excitin' life.

I met up with Tommy about five years ago in a burg called Boomtown. It's out in Illinois somewhere, but you can't prove it by no map. The mail-order guys knows where it is, though—they buy autos from them burgs. I had "Madame Gray's Revenge" out doin' th' tanks. We gave a parade, a band concert, an' threw th' show in. We were gettin' by with it an' that's all—when I look back now, though, I must say that was a lot. I had been lookin' after th' advance work myself, an' apart from that I led th' band, doubled in th' show, an' did a specialty with th' soubrette.

When we hit Illinois we run into a lot of fair dates. I figgered if I could get some good live guy ahead of th' show who could handle a brush an' get 'em past th' box office on th' first night we could clean up. I put an ad in th' *Clipper*. Th' first returns showed a majority of two hundred and thirty-one twenty-eight-carat agents were willing to take a chance with my troupe. I threw two hundred and thirty applications away an' fell for one that ran somethin' like this:

DAN MORGAN, *Mgr. "Madame Gray's Revenge," Boomtown, Ill.*

DEAR SIR: Luckily for you I read your ad in the *Clipper*. Don't open any more letters after you read this. Sit down and send for me at once. If I don't pack 'em in I'll buy your attraction. No salary until I make good, then whatever you think I'm worth. I never had a drink of anything stronger than ice-cream soda in my life. I can't stay in the same room with a cigarette. My working day is twenty-four hours. Awaiting your wire, TOM CLEARY.

Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, Ill.

Th' third time I read it I sent for Tommy. I figgered that if he could talk like he wrote he'd do.

About three o'clock th' next mornin' I thought some small-time second-story man was tryin' to climb over th' transom into my room. I listened an' heard a knock on th' door. It wasn't no quick, nervous knock like a guy who's run upstairs an' found th' room an' wants to get in in a hurry. It was a tired, weary knock, as if th' knocker had been on th' job all night an' was ready to stick until mornin'.

"Whadda ya want?" I yells out.

"Mr. Morgan?" comes from th' other side of th' door.

"What is it—a telegram?" I asks.

"Nope; guess again."

I opens th' door. A tall, lean, lanky guy sails in, drops a suit case on th' floor, grabs a chair, an' sets down. He

looks around th' room for a minute, then points at a calendar that was hangin' over th' mantelpiece. It had a picture of "Venus at the Well" or somethin' like that on it.

"Who's that—the leadin' woman?" says he.

"I ain't got a nickel," I remarks, "so you might as well work th' next floor."

"Cheer up!" he says. "You'll have more dough than you ever seen in your life by th' end of th' week. Now gimme a line on your show, a coupla programs, an' about twenty-five dollars, an' I'll go away from here an' rib th' natives up."

I set down on th' side of th' bed.

"Your name Cleary?" I says.

"Cleary is right!" he answers. "Thomas S. Cleary, late of th' 'Merry Whirl,' now agent for 'Madame Gray's Mistake,' or is it 'Revenge'? I'm real sorry to invade your boudoir at this unseemly hour, but I just got here and I want to make an early start."

"Well," I says, gettin' up, "if you ain't crazy you ought to make good. Come around in th' mornin' an' I'll talk business with you."

"What!" he says. "Waste a whole perfectly good night! Why, I'll have this town all cleaned up by morning. Besides, I got a scheme I'm going to try out here for to-morrow night's show. I doped it all out comin' here on th' train. I got it on th' brain pan now, an' by to-morrow night it will come to a beautiful boil; then I'll dish it out to th' natives, who'll fall for it as Anthony did for Cleopatra."

What could you do with a guy like that? When I finally eased him out th' door it was seven a. m. I was all in, an' he was as fresh as a daisy. He told me th' "S" in his name stood for "sleepless."

Along around noon Tommy comes back an' we go downstairs to th' hotel office together. Tommy stands near th' door, carelesslike, an' I walks up to th' desk, as per th' scheme he had doped out. Th' clerk was shyin' th' mail into them little boxes at th' back of th' counter. He was th' regular made-in-Boomtown product. Besides bein' hotel clerk he was treasurer of th' opera house an' dramatic critic of th' Boomtown *Daily News*. He carried his honors heavy, too. I got his attention by droppin' a quarter on th' counter. It rolled on th' floor on th' other side, an' when he stoops to look for it I says: "Oh, that's all right; leave it for th' sweeper." Then I says:

"Can I speak to you alone?"

He puts his foot on th' quarter, an' says:

"If you fellers can't pay your bill you'll have to see th' boss. I guess I'll just send upstairs for your baggage. I——"

"One moment!" I says, givin' him th' head-waiter stuff. "I'll overlook your insult because of your youth an' th' importance of th' matter on hand. I got enough money to pay off th' first, second, an' third mortgages on this town." I pulls out a roll of sixty one-dollar bills, with a five on th' outside. "Do you care to count this?" I says.

Well, he fell all over th' place apologizin', an' even went so far as to offer me a cigar. Tommy had edged up to th' desk by this time, an' at a nod from him I played th' next card.

"This gentleman," I says, pointin' to Tommy, "is a secret-service detective from Washington, District of Columbia —Mr. White"—that was Tommy—"meet Mr. Simons."

The clerk looked as if he was about to confess all, but I went on before he could get set.

"Mr. White," I says, "has been on th' trail of one of th' most dangerous criminals in th' country for th' past six months. This man has conceived a mad infatuation for our beautiful an' talented leadin' lady, Miss Eloise St. Clair——"

"Is that th' red-headed one?" th' clerk butts in.

"Miss St. Clair is th' proud possessor of Titian tresses," I says, frownin' at th' clerk.

"As I said before," I went on, "this man is absolutely crazy about Miss St. Clair. He has followed our attraction into all th' cities we have played since leavin' Chicago. He has created many undesirable scenes with his wild pleadings that he be allowed to have but one word with th' object of his mad affection. He has been arrested many times, but powerful influences have saved him from punishment. Now I have brought th' matter to th' attention of th' government, an' they have sent one of their best men'—here Tommy bowed modestly—"to run this man down and incarcerate him until he recovers his senses."

"I trust I can look for your cooperation in this matter," Tommy broke in in a confidential tone to th clerk.

"What kin I do?" asks th' hick.

"Just this," answers Tommy. "I have information that this man will come to th' hotel here this afternoon an' ask if Miss St. Clair is a guest. You are to say she is not. If he becomes insistent I will be standing near, and at a nod from you I will act."

"What does he look like?" asks th' clerk.

"I have never seen him," answers Tommy, "but I have a very good description of him. He is short and stocky, has long black hair, and piercing eyes. I know that for a man of your perception that will be enough."

Well, this stuff went very big with friend clerk. He ate it up. Tommy swore him to secrecy, an' by three o'clock nearly all th' citizens of Boomtown who were not in jail or otherwise confined were on hand, as they say, at th' hotel.

We had a property man with th show named Deegan. He played a couple of bits. He had one ambition in life an' that was to play th' heavy in "Madame Gray's Revenge." He was crazy about th' part, an' admitted bein' a better actor than th' guy that was playin' it. Tommy rehearsed Deegan for two hours until he was letter perfect in th' part of th' dangerous criminal madly in love with Eloise St. Clair, th' leadin' woman. Eloise an' Deegan was as friendly as th' kaiser an' King George, so you can see that it come hard to Deegan. I promised him a five-dollar bonus an' a chance to understudy th' heavy man if th' scheme went through.

I guess it was about five o'clock that fateful day that a short, stocky, long-haired guy walked up to th' desk of th' Imperial Hotel, Boomtown, Illinois, an' asked to have his card sent up to Miss St. Clair. Tommy was talkin' to th' clerk an' moved to one side. The Boomtown police force was draped here an' there around th' hotel. Th' voters an' their consorts were also there three deep.

Say, when I've thought of it since, it was a good plant. Nothin' wrong with it at all. It wasn't Deegan that did it. No, sir, it was a guy called Ambition. Same guy that put Tommy where he is to-day, started th' war, built all these big bridges an' things, an' made a few presidents. Figger it out yourself. Deegan had a bigger house to play to than he ever had in his life—the house was with him, too, an' when that all sank in he simply couldn't walk up an' turn this trick the way he was told. He was there to show 'em that he was an artist. He felt it. He got into that part there as if he was livin' it; yes, an' when he walked into that hotel he wasn't playin' no part. No, sir! Deegan was wildly in love with Miss Eloise St. Clair *from that minute on.* Get me?

Well, Deegan presents his card.

"Miss St. Clair is not in," says th'

clerk, throwin' out his chest. You see, he had it, too. There was a big bunch out in front—maybe his girl was there.

Deegan's next move was not written in his part. He either forgot or cast off th' lines Tommy rehearsed him in, for he pulls a wicked-lookin' gun from his hip pocket an' points it at th' clerk.

"Send my card upstairs this instant or I'll fill you full of holes!" he grits through his teeth.

A hairpin fell out of some woman's hair, an' I heard it, on th' level. There was a short stage wait. Th' natives were edgin' toward th' door, an' Tommy was edgin' toward Deegan. Th' clerk ducked under th' counter.

Tommy steps up to Deegan.

"Well, my man," he says, "I've got you at last!" And he pulls a pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

"One more step an' you're a dead man!" pipes Deegan, levelin' th' gun.

"You crazy fool!" Tommy says in a stage whisper. "Drop that gun; you'll crab the act!" He walks up to Deegan.

Bang! goes Deegan's gun. Tommy dives under a chair. Say, did you ever see a cattle stampede? Th' entrance to th' Imperial Hotel was built to admit about three citizens at once under pressure. When ninety tried to make it it gave some. Deegan leaps on th' counter.

"I must see her! I will see her!" he yells, wild-eyed. "They shall not keep her from me!" Bang! bang! bang!

Well, it was some party while it lasted. Finally Tommy an' me calms Deegan with a couple of chairs. We took his gun away—it had one more blank cartridge in it. He was all but foamin' at th' mouth.

"Well, did I deliver th' goods?" he says when he got his breath.

I got no chance to tell him. Ten Boomtown cops marched in th' broken doorway an' grabs Deegan. Some of th' crowd had returned. An ambulance pulls up an' some young kid in white ducks runs in.

"How many killed?" he asks cheerfully.

"None yet," I says, lookin' at Deegan, "but stick around!"

Tommy steps up an' says to what looks like th' head cop:

"I'll be responsible for this man, officer. I'm a secret-service man."

Th' copper looks at Deegan for a minute, then at Tommy, an' says:

"Well, you come down to th' lockup an' fix it up there. I ain't got no authority to give him to you. He's messed things up here some, an' after we get done with him you can have him."

Well, they took Deegan away.

"What now?" I says to Tommy.

"Cinch!" he says. "I'll go down an' see th' captain, slip him a couple of passes, get Deegan out, write a story for th' *Daily News,* an' watch 'em fight for seats at th' opera house to-night."

"Well," I says, "it's your move; go to it!"

We were billed to ring up at eight o'clock that night. At seven-thirty John D. couldn't have bought a ticket. They were hangin' on th' paint! I had boys goin' through th' house sellin' pictures of Eloise St. Clair for two bits, an' th' Boomtown *Daily News* with th' story of Deegan's wild infatuation. Th' only things that were missin' were Tommy an' Deegan. When neither Deegan nor Tommy were in sight at eight o'clock I began to get nervous. We used a lot of props in th' first act, an' I had a fine time diggin' them up. Deegan also had a bit to play in th' first act an' opened th' show. I did some quick thinkin' when I heard them clappin' an' stampin' out in front, so I runs in back an' starts makin' up to play Deegan's bit myself. It was a black-face part, an' I had a good layer of cork on when I heard some one sayin':

"You'll find Mr. Morgan in there."

I opens th' door of th' dressin' room, an' there stands th' biggest cop in th' United States.

"You Morgan?" he says.

"Yes," says I, "I'm Morgan. What's th' matter now?"

"You're wanted up at th' courthouse," says th' copper. "What are you doin' with that shoe blackin' on your face, eh?"

"It's African cold cream," I says. "I can't go nowhere now; I got to put this show on. I'll be up after th' performance. Tell th' judge to put mine on th' ice. Do you want to see th' show?"

"I don't want to see no show," says th' cop. "I wouldn't have to ask you if I did. I'm a officer. But if you don't want them to go to th' penitentiary you better come with me."

"Don't want who to go?" I asks. I could feel th' goose flesh risin' on me.

"Them two cut-ups of yours," he says. "Come on, I don't want to stand here all night. I got a date."

Well, what could I do? I did it. I went out in front an' made a little speech. I said th' performance would be delayed a few minutes owin' to Miss St. Clair havin' suffered a nervous shock from th' affair of th' afternoon. But if they would just have patience an' bear with her everything would be all right. In th' meantime Miss Carrie de Lys, our soubrette, would entertain them. Th' cop stood in th' wings while I was talkin'.

There was no sign of Deegan when I got to th' courthouse. But Tommy was sittin' in a chair between two policemen. Some guy made up like Uncle Sam, without th' hat, was sittin' on th' bench. There were no spectators; they were all at th' show.

Uncle Sam cleared his throat a few times when I was brought in, frowned at me over his glasses, took a bite out of a plug of tobacco, an' says:

"Are you Mr. Morgan, manager of the 'Madame Gray's Revenge' Company?"

"Guilty, as charged," I says.

"Do you know this man?" pointin' to Tommy.

"Yes," I answers, "but I'm not braggin' about it."

"Ha, ha!" laughs Tommy. "That's a good line."

"Silence!" yells a cop.

"What is this—Russia?" Tommy says sarcastically.

"Well, young man," says th' guy on th' bench to me, "th' prisoner here has just told me a remarkable story, in which you are named as an accomplice of the man Deegan. He also incriminates himself. I am holding a special session of court to dispose of this matter, the worst that has come to my notice in twenty years on the bench."

"What am I charged with?" I says.

"Inciting to riot, disorderly conduct, and conspiring to defraud. Cleary, alias White, is charged with the same offenses. But I will take into consideration the fact that he has turned State's evidence. He is also charged with attempted bribery, inasmuch as he offered me passes for the performance of 'Madame Gray's Revenge.'"

"What is Deegan charged with?" I says. "Manslaughter or arson?"

"Bring in Deegan!" says the judge.

A cop gets up, jangles some keys, an' disappears through a side door. He was back in a minute with Deegan. When Deegan saw Tommy it took th' entire police force to restrain him.

"I'll murder you, you big stiff!" he yells. "You're a fine guy, you are! You framed this thing up, an' then make me th' fall guy. If I ever get out of here I'll strangle you!"

"Poor fellow!" says Tommy. "He thinks I'm Eloise St. Clair."

Well, I saw it was no time to kid. I walks up to th' bar an' starts to work

on that judge. I made an appeal that would have saved th' Christian martyrs from th' lions. When I left off Tommy commenced; we worked in relays. Deegan was no use because all he could think of was what he'd do to Tommy. It was tough goin', but we won. Th' judge takes off his glasses, wipes his eyes, an' says:

"Well, I think you men have been sufficiently punished. There is some doubt in my mind as to whether the interests of justice demand that you be punished further. It may have been, after all, nothing worse than a harmless prank. As a moral lesson to you, though, I must inflict some punishment so that you will think twice before you attempt a similar performance. Therefore, on this occasion, I will fine you the proceeds of the performance at the opera house this evening and give you twenty-four hours to take your aggregation out of town. You and Cleary may go, but let this serve as a warning. I will have Deegan released in the morning."

They dragged th' howlin' Deegan back, an' Tommy an' I went back to th' theater.

"Tommy," I says, "here's where we part. You're too swift for me, old top, an' I feel that keepin' you along with us would only stop you from gettin' ahead. Here's your fare to Chicago, an' remember that Deegan will be turned loose in th' mornin'."

"All right, boss," says Tommy. "I enjoyed the engagement, though it was brief, immensely. I hope you have luck. But you won't have much while you carry such crude workers on your staff as Deegan. He tried to walk away with the show, and you observe the sad result."

My bit of th' gate that night was four hundred and eighty-seven dollars. I gave it to th' judge. Th' hotel guy took th' sixty ones and the five for th' damage to th' door.

COMING: More stories by Witwer. In the July 7th POPULAR there will be one called "In This Corner——," a fight story. In the July 23rd number he will tell about "That Accommodating Diamond."

ONE WAY TO SELL INSURANCE

SAN FRANCISCO boasts of one man who has produced a unique method for selling life insurance.

"I've been in a new business for the last six months," he told a friend who had just reached town. "I am selling life insurance."

He and his friends were standing at a bar, and the insurance agent was buying drinks with great generosity for anybody who happened to drop in.

"Well," said the friend, "this is a fine way to sell insurance. When do you work?"

"I'm working right now, working my head off," explained the agent.

"How do you mean?"

"I work on a new system," the agent elucidated. "When these rum hounds get to a certain point of inebriety I tell them they are nearly dead from drink, and I flash before them the figures the insurance companies give showing that every alcoholic is apt to die the next minute. Then, in the morning, when they still are scared to death, I rush around to their homes or offices and sign them up for the policies."

The Gambler

By David A. Curtis

Author of the "Old Man Greenlaw" stories.

A study in character, of a man who confesses himself an outlaw, a professional gambler whose creed is "Myself first, and the devil take the rest"—a strong man, a brainy man, yet gaining his bread from the cards; viewing life as merely an opportunity to make money and enjoy himself. The awakening of the gambler to the bigger things is achieved in a series of incidents dramatic in themselves, and doubly so as told by Mr. Curtis, whose famous creation, "Old Man Greenlaw," raconteur and poker player, has given joy to the world for twenty years.

(In Two Parts—Part One)

CHAPTER I.

A BEGINNING OF TROUBLE.

TWO men stood in the doorway of the Cadillac Hotel watching the crowds that passed along Broadway. It was near midnight, and the scene, familiar enough to both of them, had the never-failing interest of heterogeneous humanity in a fluent mass.

The two who looked on were indistinguishable at a glance from a score or so of other men who might have been noticed near by. Tall, slender, smooth-shaven, and excellently well groomed, they had the indefinable air of fitness and readiness that marks the young "sport" of New York. The studied carelessness of their bearing and the show of indifference with which they watched the hurly-burly were evidently an affectation, behind which was a reserve of potential activity, and no contemptible ability.

In the crowd was a portly gentleman, of distinguished appearance, past middle age but well preserved, walking with the assured step of one who is accustomed to deference, neither slowly nor hastily, but steadily making his way northward. The great audience that had filled the opera house a few blocks below was still coming out after a gala performance in which three of the greatest artists of the world had sung, and it was not hard to imagine that he had sat in his usual seat till the fall of the curtain and was now on his way to Rector's. With him was a young girl. As they approached, the elder of the two men in the doorway, himself under thirty, caught sight of them, and, having seen them, fixed his gaze on the girl with curious intentness. He did not start or stir, but the look was such as he was not used to give to any of her sex.

His companion had just turned to speak to him, but, noticing his look, followed its direction with his own eyes, and, seeing the girl, said carelessly: "Some skirt, eh, Bill?"

Bill frowned slightly, but said noth-

ing. Then he stepped suddenly forward. Around the corner at the moment had come a man who, it appeared, was also watching the girl. Stepping up beside her without speaking, he undertook to put a card in her hand. It was done adroitly and in a manner not likely to attract the attention of any one else. Only one other person in the throng perceived it, and he saw on the instant that the girl ignored the attempt. She did not look at the man, or even withdraw her hand, but walked steadily on. The next instant the man was gone, and, without turning her head, or knowing what had happened, she continued on her way with her companion.

The skulking man suddenly found himself a dozen feet away, directly in the path of the automobiles that were scurrying along. He scrambled out of their way in great haste, and then looked angrily at Bill Blair, who stood at the curb watching him calmly. It appeared, however, that he had no wish to experience any further manhandling, and, cursing a little under his breath, he disappeared around the corner whence he had come. And Blair stepped back to the doorway.

"I call that a pretty fair opening, Bill," said his friend, laughing and looking after the girl. "Why didn't you follow it up?"

Blair frowned again. "She isn't that kind," he said briefly, and Frank Studley, looking at him, checked his impulse to laugh again. He knew Blair fairly well.

Out of the crowd came a friend of Studley's, frankly professing a thirst, seeking companionship. Studley responded tc an invitation, but Blair declined too curtly for courtesy, and the two stepped into the hotel café, leaving him in the doorway, still observing the crowd.

Half an hour later, he sauntered into Rector's. To him came immediately the head waiter with somewhat more than his usual affability. "I'm sorry, Mr. Blair," he said, "but I cannot give you your usual table to-night, but if you will step this way——"

"Never mind," said Blair carelessly. "I am looking for some friends. If I find them, I will join them." And he strolled through the rooms, looking at one party and another without seeming to do so, till after a time he saw the two he sought. As he passed along, he greeted no one, though glances of recognition came from a number of the men who were seated here and there, and were acknowledged by the merest flicker of the eye. Of the women he seemed to take no notice.

Fortunately for his purpose, there was a table unoccupied not far from the one at which the portly gentleman sat with his companion, and, with a glance at the head waiter, who had not lost sight of him, and who came up immediately, Blair seated himself so as to face them.

"I do not find them, Gaston," he said, "but I will wait a while. I think they will be here. Send me some blue points and a pint of Chablis."

When the order was served and Gaston had returned to pour the wine himself, Blair said: "Isn't that Gordon, the railroad man, sitting opposite? I don't think I've seen him here before."

"No," said Gaston, "that is Mr. Churchill, the banker. He does not come here very often. They say his own chef is a wonderful man, but I have never met him."

"And the lady with him?" said Blair.

Gaston shot a keen glance at him, but discovered nothing. He knew that Blair knew he had no business to answer the question, but he was accustomed to use his own discretion fearlessly on occasions, and there was no expression beyond idle curiosity on the questioner's face.

Nevertheless, he looked keenly, and was not greatly misled by Blair's indif-

ference, being an astute man. Not to many persons would he have given any reply whatever, but to Blair he said, in an undertone: "That is his daughter." And he walked away after saying it.

Blair sat sipping a little of his wine and drinking in with his eyes every detail of the girl's really remarkable appearance till the two finished their supper and went away; but so unobtrusive was his gaze that not once did he meet her eyes, and he realized that to her he was merely an unnoticed unit in the assemblage. When she passed him on the way out, he did not look up.

After she had departed, he sipped a little more of his wine, and continued to pick idly at the oysters that lay untasted on his plate before he, too, arose and went away.

CHAPTER II.

A TWENTIETH-CENTURY CREED.

"How did you come to take it up?" said Studley. "We all thought, when you took your degree, that you had a career ahead of you, though some of the fellows doubted whether you'd stick to civil engineering. We sort of felt that you could qualify for almost anything, from the priesthood to aviation. I'm not overburdened with scruples myself, but I must say it jarred me some when I learned that you were a professional gambler."

"Yes, I presume it did," said Blair thoughtfully. If the question jarred him, he gave no sign of it. The man who asked it had been his closest friend at Princeton, though he was in a lower class, and there was an abiding intimacy between them. The similarity of tastes and the wide differentiality of ideals that are said to make for happiness in marriage had served in their case to foster an unusual friendship. They were accustomed to talk without reserve. With Studley he was willing enough to discuss matters that no other man would have ventured to suggest.

"Did you drift into it, Bill?" asked the other. "If you did, and if you want to get out of it, you know——" And he hesitated. Even he did not care to offer assistance to a man who had never asked it.

"Yes, I know," said Blair, "but I have no desire to change. I never drifted into anything in my life, and, strange as it may seem to you, I chose my trade deliberately."

"It seems impossible," said Studley.

"It may seem curious," was the retort, "but why should it seem impossible? See here. All mankind is struggling for one and the same thing, if we leave out the dreamers and idealists. Every man is trying to get possession of the results of toil. It isn't the toil we enjoy; it is the result of the toil. In a concrete form, that is money, since money is the instrument we use to exchange the immediate result of labor for something else which we prefer. That much is A, B, C.

"I am frankly an outlaw, and the difference between me and the men who rank as the masters of finance is that we evade the rules differently. They are stronger than I am, and their winnings are bigger than mine, but, mind you, I do not say this to excuse my attitude. I am not looking for an excuse, and it would not be any excuse to say that somebody else, or any number of somebodies, were doing the same thing. I stand on my right as a man to do anything I see fit to do, and I freely acknowledge the right of mankind to prohibit me from doing it if they can. As to the right to punish me, that is a different matter and need not be discussed. Whether it is right or not, I can be punished, and it will do me no good to protest. All I can do against the forces of civilization is to evade the rules, and so much I am willing to try, but I am not foolish

enough to break natural laws if I can help it, because no escape from them seems possible.

"Recognizing no human law as binding if I can evade it, and seeing that natural law recognizes no claim on anything excepting that of possession, I therefore take possession of whatever I desire whenever I am able to do so, and by any means which I see fit to employ. And I justify myself in doing so by the reasons I have given, regardless of what any one man or mankind collectively may say or think about it.

Of course, I realize that this code probably shuts me off from all friendship with anybody. That risk I take."

"It seems to me," said Studley, who had listened with growing amazement, "that all this is the ethical belief of a pickpocket."

"It is," declared Blair unhesitatingly. "The ethics are precisely the same that govern the possession of anything which is not the direct product of the possessor's own toil. The objection to picking pockets lies in the fact that the pickpocket has a crude method. His finesse is purely physical, and so direct and summary that society is able to meet his efforts, whenever he is detected, with measures of repression that are equally summary and crude."

"The only difference there is, then, between you and the pickpocket is that your finesse is superior to his," exclaimed Studley indignantly, but as if he still expected some disclaimer.

But none came. "Yes, if you choose to put it that way," Blair answered coolly enough. "We are both of us on the same plane with the professional man who charges one client more than another for the same service because he thinks he can get it."

There was a long pause. Neither man seemed to be able to find anything more to say. But finally Studley rose from his chair.

"You lose, Bill," he said. "You were entirely right when you said that a professional gambler cannot expect to have friendship, regard, or respect from anybody." And he left the room.

Blair sat smoking for a long time after he had gone, but at length he, too, arose, and, making ready for bed, he lay down and slept.

It was not often that he dreamed, or, if he did, he dreamed lightly, retaining only faint memories of the hazy thoughts that troubled his slumbers not at all. But that night he played a desperate game with some vague shape behind a heavy veil, and the counters in the game were Hope, Faith, Charity, Honor, Self-respect, Reputation, Friendship, Love, and Purity.

One by one he staked them in the game and one by one he lost them, till at last he had only one stake left, and as he was about to play that against his remorseless antagonist he perceived that what he had reckoned his Pride was only a spurious coin of no value whatever. Nevertheless, he threw it on the table, and though the dealer laughed in bitter mockery the cards were dealt once more, and Pride, too, was swept away.

When he awoke he was shuddering, and only by a determined effort was he able to regain the poise he had attained with difficulty. But the dream was unforgotten.

CHAPTER III.

BLAIR COMMUNES WITH HIMSELF, AND EXERCISES.

As the days passed Blair found himself recurring again and again to the recollection of the girl he had seen in Rector's, and the thought was more disquieting than any other that had ever come to him. One detail of that recollection in particular came back with maddening iteration. As she had walked toward him in the crowd he had been reminded of a half-forgotten

line in the classics: *"Dea vera incessu patuit."*

Himself a trained athlete, he had recognized in the freedom and rhythm of her gait the unmistakable evidence of a faultless physique. The beauty and animation of her face, when he saw that, had compelled such admiration as he had seldom given to any one, being fastidious in his taste as to the appearance of women, but the first thought was uppermost. She had been instantly fixed in his mind as a "true goddess." And that fact, coupled with others, troubled him.

Illusions had no place in his plan of existence. It was his habit to consider nothing but facts as he perceived them, and certain of these presented themselves in a fashion that was sufficient to cause trouble. Nevertheless, he faced them unwillingly enough, but clear-eyed.

It was not difficult to realize what manner of woman she was. He knew well enough, being a well-informed New Yorker, that Ethel Churchill was the only daughter of a man whose position in the social and financial world was beyond the possibility of question. That fact loomed large, though it had been entirely unimportant to him before he saw her. The customs and traditions of such families as hers were familiar enough to him.

There was clear and fearless comprehension in her eye, and all the pride of virginity in her bearing. No contemptible thing would ever escape her scorn. No unworthy thing could claim her attention. The entire atmosphere of her surroundings was that in which no plan or aim of his could possibly remain.

All this he saw plainly and realized as thoroughly as he understood the attitude he had taken toward the rest of the world. Yet he could by no means dismiss the thought of her, and, being what he was, he set himself to work to study the situation. One of his rules was never to make a bet without considering the odds. He might bet, even when the odds were beyond computation, but not without understanding that fact.

"No man can play two games at once," he told himself, "if he hopes to win at either one of them." And the question before him was which one he should play.

Just then he nicked his face with his razor, and the more serious problem was laid aside for the moment while he busied himself trying to stop the trifling but annoying flow of blood that followed.

The cut on his face gave him no anxiety on the score of appearance, but the fact that he had made it in shaving and that he had done the same thing twice before inside of a week indicated that something was wrong. It was an essential necessity in his business that he should be able to control every motion of his well-trained fingers with absolute accuracy. Years of patient practice had enabled him to use them so deftly that he had come to rely on their perfect working at all times. This was another of his assets. It came to him forcibly that he must be getting out of training.

As a rule he rose early. His day began usually about the time that other men were turning from the consideration of business cares to the pursuit of pleasure, but it was his habit to devote some hours to careful preparation before beginning his business, so that he was usually astir by three o'clock in the afternoon. By five, having dressed and breakfasted, he went for an hour or two of exercise, sometimes on the river, but more commonly on horseback, having a pet mare, chosen and prized by him because of certain characteristics that rendered her wholly useless to any one else. It had been hard work to teach her that his will

was stronger than hers, and still harder to win her confidence, but he had succeeded in establishing a relationship with her which, being founded on mutual respect, was gradually ripening into affection, though it was still maintained with wary observance on both sides, neither one having acquired full confidence in the other.

"She's in a devil of a temper to-day, sir," said the hostler to him when he reached the stable with his mind still fixed on the necessity for training himself more vigorously. Jimmy's respect for the mare was no less than her owner's, but it included a scant amount of affection. He esteemed her an equine demon and watched her with unremitting care.

"Ye'd best be careful, sir," he went on. "Sure I think she'd bite her own foal if she had one the way she's been goin' on the day."

'Good!" said Blair, going straightway into her box stall with an apple in his hand.

No one else gave her apples, and for the moment she gave her full attention to the luscious morsel, but when Blair laid his hand caressingly on her neck she turned her head like lightning and snapped at it viciously.

Had it not been for Jimmy's warning she might have caught it, though even that was doubtful. As it was, she caught a blow under the ear that almost stunned her for a moment. And before she recovered there came another, still more cruel.

"I hate to do it, Beauty," said Blair, as if reasoning with a child, "but you must learn, you know." And almost in an instant he had her bridled with the curb reins gripped firmly under her jaw.

Even then there was a struggle, but her master had not studied Rarey's methods in vain, and it was not long before she was saddled as well.

When it came to putting foot in stirrup to mount, the mare swerved swiftly, and Blair was near falling, but at the second attempt he succeeded, and swinging himself into the saddle was off for a wild ride. When he came back to the stable the mare was well chastened, and Jimmy's troubles were over for the day.

Blair was not so well satisfied. "What's the use of turning a trick ninety-nine times," he said to himself as he walked away, "if you turn the wrong card the hundredth? That's twice I've slipped up this morning. It must be my nerves. I suppose I have them."

CHAPTER IV.

BLAIR LEAVES HOME.

It was his nerves. At least that's what the doctor said. Whenever Blair sought advice, which he did only when he failed to decide a matter by reason of his own imperfect knowledge of conditions, he was not satisfied with anything short of the very best that was to be had, deeming it folly to rely on the conclusions of any one whose judgment might be no better than his own.

Accordingly having decided tentatively, at least, that his nervous system was out of gear, he applied to the most renowned specialist in nervous troubles of whom he was able to learn. Somewhat to his surprise, he was obliged to wait two days before securing an appointment. New York is full of nervous people.

When he was finally admitted to the inner office the great man looked at him keenly for a few moments, saying nothing, while Blair waited, also in silence, recognizing the professional attitude. Presently the doctor reached for a small instrument on his well-furnished table, and, adjusting it to Blair's wrist, placed a piece of paper so as to receive the impressions made by a needlelike point that immediately started in motion.

"What is it?" asked Blair, indicating the instrument.

"A sphygmograph," said the doctor, "and this is the way your pulse is beating," he added after a few moments, showing the paper on which now appeared an irregular line that might have been taken for the picture of a stroke of lightning.

"Looks like a stock-market chart after a busy day," was Blair's comment.

"Quotations are not very steady, that's a fact," said the doctor dryly. "Look at this!" And he pointed at a small paper weight on his desk. "Now shut your eyes and put your finger on it."

Reaching forward to do so after closing his eyes, Blair was fairly astonished to find that he had missed the weight by the fraction of an inch.

"Something wrong, eh?" he inquired.

"Yes," said the doctor promptly, "but it is certainly remarkable that you suspected it so soon. It's incipient trouble now. You can cure it yourself in a month, but you won't. At least, if you do, you'll be an exception."

"How so?"

"Well, there are not many men who are willing to change their habits before it gets too late to do any good. If you will change yours entirely you'll be all right in a few weeks. You have the right kind of machinery. If you don't—well, if you don't you'll be coming back to me after a while asking me to perform a miracle. I may be able to do it, but I won't promise. The chances are——"

"There are no chances," interrupted Blair. "You're the dealer, and I'll play the cards I have. Show me the hand."

"Keep regular hours," said the doctor. "Eat simple food. Smoke less. Tobacco is hurting you. How many cigars have you been smoking?"

"I don't know. Fifteen or twenty a day, perhaps."

"Then you can't stop suddenly. Limit yourself to ten, and cut down to three as fast as you can."

"I can stop entirely if you say so."

"Yes, I presume you could. You could cut off your foot if I told you to. The other way is better—for you.

"Sleep all you possibly can, and don't do anything else whatever excepting to rest yourself. Don't even think if you can help it. Fifty dollars."

"Gee!" exclaimed Blair, with a laugh, producing the money. "Your game beats poker. You win every deal, don't you?"

"Yes," said the doctor, with a smile, "but it's different from poker. You'll win out yourself if you back the hand."

A short sea voyage commended itself to Blair's consideration as the most easily available method of breaking away from the routine of life as he had been living, and half an hour later he was in the office of a coastwise steamship company asking for passage to some specially quiet locality. There was a boat to sail next morning, and he promptly engaged a stateroom.

Going home after engaging his passage, he said to his servant: "Pack a steamer trunk and a grip. I'm going away for a few weeks." And without further thought of detail he proceeded to take the doctor's prescription as to sleep. It was fifteen hours to the time he had to be on board, and he spent twelve of them in bed.

If Ito experienced any annoyance he gave no sign. He knew his master too well to ask any questions, even if he had been disposed to do so, which he probably was not, being a Japanese. He took his New York with the same placid acceptance of conditions with which he would have settled himself among barbarians anywhere else in the world.

After an untroubled sleep that occupied the most of the twelve hours he spent in bed, Blair rose, so refreshed

that another man in his condition might have deemed himself justified in disregarding the doctor's orders. Intellectually, however, Blair was extremely conscientious. When he decided on a system in any game he played it to a finish, regardless of fluctuations. Accordingly he laid down the cigar he had been, from the force of habit, about to light when he wakened, and went directly to his bath without the preliminary stimulation.

When the steamer sailed he sat on deck, feeling as little like an invalid as could be well imagined, but no way disposed to relax the rigor of the treatment he had undertaken.

CHAPTER V.

A DEAL FROM THE BOTTOM.

Doing nothing whatever, excepting to sleep, is as nearly practicable on board a well-appointed steamship as it is anywhere, providing one is a passenger and not a member of the crew. Nevertheless there are some activities necessary even aboard ship, if only as preliminaries to complete inactivity. Blair's first step was to select, by observation, the most capable-appearing steward among the few that were needed for the requirements of a steamer of the size of the *Queen*, on which he was sailing. His next step was to astonish that functionary with a tip such as he had never before received.

"You'll get another before we land," he said. "Now look after me." And he promptly dismissed all thought of details.

Being satisfied that the doctor's restrictions in regard to tobacco were altogether too liberal, he had fixed upon five as the number of cigars to be enjoyed each day until he could reduce it to three without too much discomfort. One of the five he had smoked after his breakfast at home, and, having by this time a most unholy longing for another, he settled himself in the steamer chair which his newly purchased slave had placed for him, and proceeded to light up, while he fixed his mind on a serious effort to carry out the doctor's other order—to stop thinking.

Like every one else who has ever tried that little experiment, he found it an absolute impossibility. "Not to think," he said to himself after he had been engaged in the attempt for some time, "seems to be out of the question. Probably the next best thing is to think of nothing." And forthwith he endeavored to form a mental concept of nothingness. To his surprise, for he had never made the effort before, he was soon forced to the conclusion that this was also outside the limits of human intellect. It was easy enough to define nothing. Imagine it he could not. And he noted this fact with great interest.

From time to time other passengers passed before him, strolling around the deck in apparent aimlessness without attracting his attention, but presently appeared a youth whose bearing and general appearance were unusually noticeable.

He was possibly twenty years of age, well featured, tall, and slender, clothed expensively and well, with a suggestion of combined foppery and carelessness not unbecoming to a youngster. There was, however, a cock-a-hoop assurance in his air that seemed curiously at variance with his somewhat overrefined face, and a swagger in his gait that might have been natural and unaffected, but looked more as if it had been cultivated. Unusually attractive as he was at the first glance, the effect he produced on the observant beholder was marred by bumptious precocity and a self-consciousness that was ostentatious enough to belittle the first impression.

Impatiently the youngster paced to and fro as if wholly at a loss to know

what to do with himself. He, too, was smoking, and as Blair had noticed by a whiff of the smoke as he gave the swift look that had taken in every observable detail of the other's ensemble, the cigar was of a brand that even so seasoned a smoker as himself indulged in only on special occasions, it being not only of exceptional flavor, but also of exceptional strength. And as the boy finished one cigar he lighted another from the butt before tossing that overboard. Moreover, he smoked rapidly, as if greedy of overstimulation. It was easy to see that he was self-indulgent to a degree.

Hardly was this next cigar well alight, however, before he threw that overboard also, with a muttered oath that was barely loud enough for Blair to hear. Alert by habit, despite his present effort to achieve passivity, the latter looked involuntarily around to see the cause of annoyance, and was himself profoundly disturbed.

Coming swiftly toward them, with that marvelous gait that had first caught his attention, radiant with the beauty that had fixed it, and with a look in her eyes that Blair interpreted instantly as strong affection, was the girl he had seen only once before, who had set him dreaming as he had never dreamed before.

So evident was her affection, and so plainly was the flamboyant youth the object of it that Blair, who had regarded him with some contempt and more indifference up to that moment, conceived immediately a violent dislike for him. It was one thing to contemplate a renunciation of his own dreams of the girl because of the great gulf between them. It was entirely a different thing to contemplate her as belonging to one even less worthy of her than he was himself.

As it was, the girl and boy joined step and walked together along the deck, unconscious of even the presence of the man in the steamer chair. Before they passed out of earshot he heard a few sentences of their talk.

"Bad boy!" said the girl, with reproach in her tone, too tender to carry a sting. "Dad's gone to his room to get over his seasickness alone, and I came right out to join you. And I find you smoking again. Are you going to keep all your promises like that?"

"Give you my word, Ethel," said the boy, "I had only just lighted that. I threw it away as soon as I thought what I was doing."

"Yes, that was when you saw me," was the quick retort. "I wish I could always appear just in time to stop you from——"

But he interrupted her eagerly. "That's different," he exclaimed. "A man smokes without thinking when he has the habit. You don't believe I'd drink or gamble again."

It was all that Blair heard, but it was more than enough.

"And the doctor says I mustn't think if I can help it," he said to himself bitterly. "It's going to be easy—not. She's going to have a harder time trying to reform that pup than she would with me. God knows that would be a job even if I should turn to and help."

Pondering thus, the utter uselessness of anything worth while, he took another cigar out of his case and looked at it doubtfully for a long time before he finally put it back, and, snapping the case together viciously, returned that to his pocket. "I'll play that game to a finish anyhow," he thought, "whether I sit in at the other or not."

With that in mind he tried with indifferent success to sleep away the remainder of the day, finding himself, in consequence, broad awake at midnight, still longing for tobacco. "I can smell it, anyhow, without doing any great damage, I reckon," he said as he made his way to the smoking room of the ship.

It was a rather small apartment, and there were possibly a dozen men there already, but there were vacant chairs, and, after a quick glance around, he selected one next the youth he disliked so greatly.

There was a game of poker in progress, and the boy was one of the players. Blair had no intention whatever of taking a hand, but was sufficiently interested to watch the game.

After what Blair had heard him say to the girl, however, there was a particular interest in observing the total disregard he manifested for his spoken word.

"This surely is one whelp," was Blair's thought as he seated himself a little back from the table, but sufficiently near to see all that went on.

The game itself was of little interest to him, being, as he saw almost immediately, played with a quarter limit, but the manner of playing was worthy of attention.

There were six at the table, and opposite the boy sat a man named Freel, whom Blair recognized as a professional known to him by sight, but not in the same class with himself, and one he justly despised as belonging to the small fry of the gambling fraternity.

That Freel also knew him he had no doubt, but neither man betrayed his recognition of the other.

The four others at the table he promptly classed as amateurs, playing only for amusement, and interesting only as possible victims of Freel in some larger game to which this one might be merely a prelude. For a moment only he considered whether Freel and the boy opposite him might be confederates, but it seemed unlikely, and presently he saw that they were not.

Freel was cheating in so barefaced a fashion that it seemed strange for the others not to see it. As Blair looked on he noted again and again some trick of sleight of hand, done clumsily enough to challenge observation, yet successfully, in that the others failed to detect it. And gradually his contempt for the 'cheap skate, of the tinhorn variety," was tempered with a certain respect for his audacity. And he found himself looking with grim complacency for the probable discomfiture of the cub who needed humiliation so sadly.

As the play went on his interest grew. Sitting where he did, he found no great difficulty in watching the hands that fell to the boy he disliked, and, considerably to his surprise, he discovered that the boy understood the game remarkably well. His play was not only correct in every instance, but seeing on one occasion a good opening for a bluff he undertook it boldly, and, being successful, raked the pot with precisely the right appearance of cool indifference. It was the more notable, in Blair's estimation, by reason of his being unquestionably flushed with drink. A half-finished high ball stood on the table in front of him, and it was evident enough that he had had as much as was good for him before that had been brought. Yet there was no mistaking the fact that he had bluffed with excellent judgment and cool nerve.

"A man who can do that in a quarter-limit game is certainly a poker player," was Blair's mental comment, and to that extent he modified his judgment of the lad. Presently, however, he saw something more which would have intensified his hatred greatly if that sentiment had been founded on moral considerations. As it was, he merely smiled.

The deal came around to the boy, and when he picked up his hand Blair saw that he had three aces, a nine, and a seven-spot. It was a good hand, but one that might easily be overplayed, and Blair looked with curiosity to see whether his opinion of the boy's ability would be confirmed or not.

The usual ante had been placed, and the next man came in. Then Freel raised it a quarter, and the next player dropped. The next, however, trailed, and the dealer promptly made it a quarter more.

The player with the ace abandoned his ante, and the next, who might have been a seafaring man, judging from his appearance, grumbled good-naturedly about the double raise, but put up his chips.

Then Freel raised again, and the man who had trailed him before threw down his cards, leaving the next say to the dealer, whose hand shook ever so slightly as he gave the pot another boost. It might have been the liquor he was drinking that made it shake, but Blair was inclined to think it was excitement, and since there was no great money interest in the game he decided that the boy was nerving himself for a struggle of wits.

Once more the elderly-looking sailor made good on the double raise, and once more Freel came back. It did not seem likely that he would go so far on anything less than a pat hand, and Blair looked to see the boy trail. He had gone far enough on three aces, but his chance in the draw was well worth a quarter, so that he would have been justified in staying.

The boy, however, raised again, showing, according to Blair's judgment, that his excitement was affecting his play. And there was no room for doubt that Freel played correctly when he closed the pot, the sailor having been finally driven out. A pretty contest was still to come.

"I'll play these," said Freel indifferently when the boy picked up the deck and asked him how many cards he would have.

"Dealer takes one," was the next utterance, and again Blair wavered in his opinion. It looked like an attempt at another bluff, not only too soon after the preceding one, but altogether hopeless, considering the play already made and the smallness of the limit.

The boy, however, dealt himself the one card from the bottom of the deck.

He did it with considerable dexterity, so that Blair, although he saw it plainly himself, thought for an instant that no one else had observed it. Evidently there was much to be learned about this boy that the girl was so fond of.

But Freel had also seen the trick, though no one else appeared to have done so. "That don't go!" he exclaimed. "You took that off the bottom."

"You're a liar!" shouted the boy, starting to his feet and reaching for his hip pocket.

It might have been a bluff. Blair thought it was, but wishing to see how far it would go he sat still, though he could easily have caught the boy's hand from behind had he been so minded. Freel had also risen from his chair, reaching back in like fashion, and Blair waited to see if weapons would actually be drawn.

The others in the room, however, regarded the situation from a different angle. Two men seized the boy from behind, and the seafaring man shoved Freel back in his chair with a powerful back-handed push that was little short of a blow.

"Avast there!" he exclaimed. "The cap'n'll have you both in irons if you pull guns. I know him." And whether or not the two would have really come to a fight they yielded readily enough to restraint, and made no further show of violence.

There arose, however, a great confusion of voices, Freel charging that he had seen the trick performed, and the boy denying it vehemently, while the others commented variously, and Blair listened in silence. But the boy was equal to the occasion.

"Why should I deal foul?" he de-

manded angrily. "I had four aces, and one card was as good as another in the draw." And with a motion so quick that no one but Blair detected the shifting of the cards in his hand he turned them over, showing that he really had four aces, with a nine following. And the aces showed in an unbroken sequence as he spread them out.

Freel still sputtered angrily, but the others were convinced, and, catching a momentary interval of silence, Blair claimed the tinhorn's attention with a look of peculiar significance.

"I wouldn't say anything more about cheating if I were in your place," he said quietly.

There was that in Freel's eyes which indicated a perfect willlingness to fall in with any purpose Blair might have in mind, though he caught no answering gleam of recognition when he yielded readily enough.

"I reckon I must have been mistaken then," he muttered, interposing no objection when the boy raked in the pot with fingers that still trembled.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE.

No, the steward did not know who the young man was, but if Mr. Blair wanted to know it would be easy to find out all about him, and he would do so.

The young man's name was Mr. Roy Somers. He certainly belonged to the same party with the young lady with whom he was promenading at the moment, for his passage had been engaged by Mr. John Churchill at the same time that gentleman took staterooms for himself and Mrs. Churchill and Miss Ethel Churchill, who was the young lady now on deck, and who was evidently his daughter. The steward supposed, though he had not been able to get any statement to that effect, that the young man was keeping company with the young lady, and they certainly did make a 'andsome couple, sir. Would Mr. Blair have his breakfast now, sir, or would he rather have a cup of coffee brought to him on deck?

Mr. Blair thought a cup of coffee would be all he would require for a time, and it was accordingly brought to him. Excellent coffee it was, too, but there was little satisfaction to be had from drinking it when the entire scheme of the universe was reduced to chaotic confusion by the monstrous anomaly from which he could by no means divert his attention.

Nothing seemed much more certain than that the ultimate fate of Miss Ethel Churchill was a matter in which he could have no personal concern. The course of his life led down another current from that of hers. As well might he be vexed by the extinction of some star in the Milky Way as to trouble himself by any thought of what should happen to her. Yet, with a clear realization of all this, his equanimity was sorely disturbed.

As he lay in his steamer chair, trying as best he could to find the rest the doctor had prescribed, pertinaciously resolved that nothing should interfere with his purpose of restoring himself to perfect physical condition, he watched the young couple pacing the deck together, and again found it impossible to refrain from thinking.

Trying as the situation was, however, there was grim humor in the development that soon came. The couple passed around one of the deck houses, out of his sight, and a few minutes later Somers reappeared alone. Smiling in a most engaging fashion, he came directly toward Blair, taking out his cigar case as he came.

"I want to thank you for speaking up as you did last night," he said. "It was an awkward situation, and I would certainly have had some serious trouble with that bounder if you hadn't taken

the wind out of his sails so completely. It was very decent of you, and you did me even more of a favor than you realized. I'm not likely to forget it."

"It was a trifling matter," said Blair. "I happened to be looking on somewhat carefully, and as I know something about sleight of hand myself, I saw very clearly the absurdity of his charge that you were cheating. You met it in the only way possible, of course; but, as you say, it was awkward for you. It was his word against yours, and I take it they were all strangers to you."

He spoke slowly and as if the matter were really trifling, but he watched the youngster's face carefully while speaking, saying to himself at the same time: "That will show what kind of stuff there is in the cub."

But the boy met the test. Without the faintest indication of recognizing the sarcasm, he replied pleasantly: "Yes. That's the worst of playing with strangers. One is always liable to be put in a false position. But, damn it, a man has to do something. I don't get any too much time to myself just now, and seeing the game going on I naturally sat in, though it was too piffling to be really worth while. A quarter limit isn't real poker, you know."

"No," said Blair, "but it's safer than poker when you play with strangers. That man you had the trouble with is a professional."

"I saw that plain enough," replied Somers, laughing. "I could have called him down three or four times for cheating, but I did not care to. He wasn't getting any the best of me, and what he did to the others was no concern of mine. The last thing in the world that I wanted was a row. I wasn't afraid of him. I could have handled him easily enough if the others hadn't interfered, but the gov'nor would have heard of it, and that would have made all sorts of trouble. That's why I say you did me such a good turn.

"You see," he went on, with astonishing and most unnecessary communicativeness, "the gov'nor has just taken me into his office. Says he's going to make a business man of me, and he's particularly down on cards. I had to tell him I wouldn't play any more, but of course that's all rot. He's starting a new scheme just now, and brought me along to take charge of something or other he has in mind somewhere in the West Indies. I don't know exactly what it is yet, but of course it means a lot to me."

Blair seemed suddenly to perceive a glimmer of light dimly. "Isn't your governor Mr. Churchill, the banker?" he asked.

"Yes, he's a banker, all right, but he has more irons in the fire than anybody knows about. He's my stepfather, and he's a good old top, too, but he's hopelessly old-fashioned about some things. Took me out of college when he found I was getting in debt the way I was, and told me I'd have to straighten up if I expected him to look after me any longer. Of course I couldn't say anything. He'd leave all his money to Ethel if I should kick over, and she's almost as bad as he is. She'll do anything for me as long as I walk a chalk line, but she's hell bent on reforming me, as she calls it, and she's perfectly capable of cutting me off without a dollar if she finds she can't do it. Between her and the old man, I have a devil of a time sometimes."

"Must be hard," said Blair, with assumed sympathy, rejoicing inwardly at the other's loquacity, and despising him for it at the same time.

"Well, it is a little hard at times," replied Somers half laughingly, "but it is easy enough to fool Ethel. She does not understand the game, and she thinks I really want to turn over a new leaf, but I'm not always sure that I'm fool-

ing the old man. He's something of a man of the world himself, and I have fancied once or twice that he hasn't as much faith in me as I'd like him to have. He thinks the world of my mother, though, and all I have to do when he begins to get nasty is to go to her. You know how it is yourself. I can see what kind of a man you are. You know if a man really understands women he can do anything with 'em.'

"That's right," said Blair, looking at his new friend admiringly, "but it isn't every man that understands women as well as you do."

"Oh, I've made a study of 'em," said Somers complacently. "Trouble is with most men they put 'em up on a pedestal and stand 'round worshiping 'em, or else they set 'em down as all bad and don't give 'em credit for anything. Now there's two different kinds. You can't treat a good woman the same as you do a rip, but you can manage either kind if you know how."

"You are a wonder," said Blair. "There does not seem to be any question of your natural aptitude, and as for your nerve you certainly showed that last night. It would have saved me a good deal of trouble," he added modestly, "if I could have started out in life with such a clear understanding of things as you have."

"If he swallows that," he added to himself, "I'll have him hooked, and I can use the gaff whenever the time comes."

And the boy gulped the bait down, hook and all. "Well, there certainly is a heap in starting right," he said, "and I reckon I must have had natural aptitude, as you call it. But I fancy you are pretty fly your ownself. You don't look to me like a man," he went on patronizingly, 'who'd be likely to be picked up for a sucker. I'd like to play a freeze-out with you for something worth while. I believe you know poker as well as I do."

"Hardly that, I'm afraid," said Blair, "but I have played poker quite a little, and I think perhaps I know something about it. I don't play it now, though. My nerves are not quite what they were, and I'm keeping very quiet. Perhaps I may take you on some time later."

"I see," said Somers. "Been taking it out of yourself a little too much lately. You look all right, but I do that myself after I've been hitting it up a bit too hard. Nothing like a little vacation once in a while. That why you're taking a sea trip?"

Blair nodded. He was enjoying himself greatly. It seemed likely that he would be able to advance the young man's education considerably whenever he should decide that the proper time had arrived.

Accordingly, he waited, confident that Somers would continue to play into his hand, and in this no disappointment came to him, for the boy, seemingly delighted at finding an appreciative listener, continued to vaunt himself.

"I used to do a good deal of that sort of thing when I was younger," he said, "but there isn't a terrible lot in it, after all. Of course there's a heap of fun in letting yourself go, and I don't mind getting a good souse once in a while when I can get away from home. But, after all, there's more satisfaction in keeping your head. I've got so that I can drink just enough to feel happy and yet keep inside the limit. It takes self-control, but I've got that all right, and there isn't any reason why a man with your brains shouldn't do the same thing. You'll find it the best way."

"That's true philosophy," said Blair, with manifest approval.

"You'll find it so," returned the other, rising and taking out his cigar case. "Have another. No? Well, some people have to be careful, but tobacco never hurt me. So long. I'm awfully glad to have made your acquaintance, and

I'm going to keep an eye on you. I have an idea that we ought to be very good friends."

"It will be a privilege that I shall appreciate," said Blair, and as the other swaggered away along the deck he thought to himself, with some quiet amusement, that the boy evidently thought that he had made his acquaintance. "I certainly seem to be making his," he added.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. FREEL SITS IN.

Mr. Alec Freel was not a man who would ordinarily have acquiesced, as he had done the night before, in the taking down of a pot to which he was a contributor, and in which he had not formally relinquished his interest.

No man whom he knew objected more strenuously than he did to the employment of illegitimate practices in the game of poker by his antagonists, and there were few who were more likely to detect them when they were tried, though he was not especially expert in them himself. Theoretically, he understood them thoroughly well, but he was, to his great regret, digitally inept. This was one of the reasons, as he realized bitterly, why he had not risen higher than he had in his profession.

Realizing his own limitations, he was keenly appreciative of the superiority of the men who stood higher than he, and among them all there was no one whom he regarded with more admiration than he did Blair, whom he knew perfectly well by sight and by reputation, though he had no personal acquaintance with him. He had recognized him instantly when Blair entered the smoking room, and had even experienced some little pride in exhibiting his own prowess under the eye of a master, though the game was a contemptible one, being for such trifling stakes.

It was therefore something of a shock to him when Blair interfered between him and Somers, but he was prompt and even eager to avail himself of the opportunity it offered him. It was plain, according to his quick judgment of the situation, that Blair was interested in Somers, regarding him probably as his own prey, and that though he disdained to participate in the paltry play that was going on at the time, he had taken the stand he did for the purpose of winning Somers' confidence.

His first step the next day was to inquire about Somers, and what he learned caused him to whistle softly to himself. His next was to approach Blair, and him he found on deck shortly after Somers had left him, carefully nursing the last part of his second cigar for the day.

With a display of assurance which he was far from feeling Freel sauntered up, and, touching his hat, said: "This is Mr. Blair, I believe?"

Blair nodded, and went on smoking.

"I knew you as soon as I seen you in the smoking room last night," said Freel. "I know who you are well enough, but I don't s'pose you know me."

"I haven't the honor," said Blair coolly, but pleasantly enough.

"Aw, quit your kiddin'. 'Tain't no honor for a man like you to know the likes o' me, but all the same it might be useful to you, and that's what I want to talk about. My name's Freel—Pete Freel—an' I'm in the same line as you, only I don't pretend to say I'm in the same class. They know me better down on the East Side than they do at Chamberlin's, but I've seen you there, too. I was in the house that night when you broke the bank. That was the best play I ever seen. I never would 'a' had the nerve to push the game like you done that night, but that's because I never had the wad. My nerve's all right if I don't get out over my head."

"I noticed you were playing quarter limit last night," observed Blair blandly.

"Aw, come now, that ain't fair," said the other, forcing a smile. "I ain't no such piker as all that. You'd play quarter limit yourself if you was tryin' to get in with a party that had real money."

"Possibly," said Blair, with an answering smile. The man was amusing.

"You know you would," pursued Freel, emboldened by the other's affability, "but that ain't here nor there. What I really want to ask you is why you butted in the way you done last night. The game wa'n't nothin' to you, an' there sure was something coming to that cub, playin' crooked like he done."

"I saw there was some crooked play," said Blair quietly.

Freel chuckled. "Oh, well," he said, without any constraint. "That's different. I put a few over myself, but he ain't no professional. You can't stand for a amateur doing it."

"No, he's no professional, but he isn't quite such a fool as you think. He saw what you were doing as well as I did. He was laughing about it this morning."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Freel, greatly astonished. "He's more of a sport than I thought he was then. I seen he was a good player, but I didn't think he was that good. Now listen:

"I don't know what your game is, Mr. Blair, but I want to get in on it. I ain't chuckin' no bluffs at you, Mr. Blair. You know the kind I am better'n I can tell you, but you don't know me. I've always made good in my class, an' I can play the cards if you deal. I don't presume to ask you to tell me any more'n you want to, but maybe I can help, and there'd ought to be something in it for me if I cap the game for you. Even if I don't make nothin' out of it I want to do what I can."

There was not much in Mr. Freel's appearance that was prepossessing. Hopeless vulgarity was written all over him, and an ugly scar, too far up on his neck to be hidden by a collar, was no enhancement of his looks, but there was an earnestness in his manner and an appeal in his eye that compelled attention, and Blair looked at him thoughtfully.

"Very well," said Blair. "I'll remember that, and if I need you I'll let you know. Just now I'm under the doctor's orders, and I'm not doing anything."

Freel stared for a moment. The man who was thus proclaiming himself an invalid looked to be in superb condition. Then a sudden gleam of understanding came to his aid. It was part of the game that Blair was playing for him to pose as a sick man.

"I see," he said, with a cunning wink. "That's a good lay. You don't look the part very well, but that's nothing these days. The doctors can always find something the matter with a man if it's only a case of nerves."

"That's it," said Blair, smiling again. "My nerves are out of order."

"Well, you don't have to tell me no more, Mr. Blair. I hope you don't never have nothin' worse happen to you. I can follow your lead all right, an' you can count me in from now on. All you have to do is to give me the office an' you'll find I'm Johnny on the spot every time."

"Very well," said Blair curtly. He was beginning to tire of the pertinacity of the man. "For a beginning I might say it will be much the best for us to be entire strangers. I don't know you, and you don't know me." And he closed his eyes and stretched himself out a little on his chair as if to go to sleep.

Mr. Freel required no further bidding. Greatly gratified at having established an understanding with one so far above him in his profession, he

went away quietly. And Mr Blair smiled again, inwardly this time.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOMERS EXPOSES HIS HAND.

There was some poker played in the smoking room of the good ship *Queen* after the game in which Somers had so narrowly escaped trouble, but the boy did not join the party again. "It isn't a good thing to kill sheep too near home," he said to Blair the next time he sought him out for a chat. "The gov'nor's pretty wide awake, and somebody must have tipped him off about the card playing. If I thought it was Ethel——"

He did not finish his sentence, but an ugly look came on his delicate face that marred his boyish beauty sadly, and Blair, following his usual habit of observing closely without appearing to do so, was greatly interested. Any side lines of information that he might get concerning the character of that young lady were well worth getting, and it now seemed possible that he might acquire some without much trouble.

"What makes you think he knows about it?" he asked.

"I can't tell you," was the answer, "but I'm sure I'm right. There's something about him, or something about me —I don't know which it is—that always tells me when I'm going to have trouble with him. I get a hunch, and the hunch is always right."

Blair nodded. He, too, believed in hunches.

"It's this way," continued the other, "the gov'nor doesn't care anything about me really, but he's always been mighty good to me for my mother's sake. He's dead in love with her, and always has been. She can do anything with him, and he knows she'd give me her right hand if I asked her for it. If it wasn't for her I wouldn't stand ace high with him, but as it is I've always had everything I wanted, except when he blows up. Then he's almighty strict with me for a while, but it never lasts long. Mother and Ethel always get around him some way or other, only Ethel is getting as bad as he is lately.

"You see, it's different with her. She's his own daughter, and he thinks more of her than anything else in the world except mother. If anything happened to either of them I believe he'd go dotty. But Ethel takes after him more or less. Takes everything seriously, and goes in for moral uplift and all that sort of thing now she's entered college."

The fatuous complacency with which this reflection was voiced was almost maddening, but Blair was eager for information. He smoked on slowly, waiting for more, but as the other lapsed into silence, evidently pondering the situation he described, Blair said, after an interval:

"I don't quite see why you tell me all this. Seems to me you are taking a rather long chance with nothing to gain by it."

"No, I'm not," said Somers positively. "I understand men as well as I do women, and I can read you like a book. You're the same kind of a man that I am. You wouldn't split on a pal no matter what happened, and there's no reason why we shouldn't be pals. In fact, that's just what I have in mind. You are a little older than I am, but I'm no kid. I've had experience to burn. I've got dozens of friends, and some of them are mighty good fellows, too, but there isn't one of 'em that I can trust like I can trust you, and I don't mind telling you that I'm looking for some one to help me put a deal through that I can't very well handle alone. I might do it, but it would be too dangerous in case anything went wrong.

"Now you're the man I'm looking for. You saw what I did in that poker

game. I don't make any bones about telling you that I play that game the same as I play any other, for all there is in it, and if I can mark the cards or deal off the bottom without getting caught I'm going to do it. You'll do the same thing yourself, or you wouldn't have stood up for me the way you did when you saw me do it. I took a chance then, if you like, and I might have lost out if it hadn't been for you, but I'm not taking chances on you. You work with me, and I'll make your everlasting fortune."

It was not easy to surprise Blair or to shock him, but he was fairly staggered at this. He winced inwardly at the other's cool assumption, and he revolted almost as entirely against the atrocious grammar as he did against the assertion of equality. Both were offensive to a fastidious man. It seemed worth while, however, to swallow his objections, and he did it.

"You certainly flatter me," he said. "I hardly think I am your equal in all things, but you are right when you say I can be trusted. There is no reason why we shouldn't have an understanding, but I don't have to tell you that it ought to be thoroughly confidential."

"Surely," said Somers eagerly. "So far as anybody else knows, it will be best for us to be only ordinary acquaintances, almost strangers, in fact."

"That will suit me," replied Blair, with a dryness which the other failed to perceive. "But what is this deal you want to make?"

"I've only got it in outline so far," said Somers, "but I'll know more about it as soon as the gov'nor gets things going. He's been getting ready for one of his big speculations for some time, and I happen to know that he's got over twelve millions together in cash to push it with. I've kept my eyes open, believe me, since he took me into his office.

"It seems that certain parties have been working quietly for a long time to get control of the entire island of Santa Clara, where we are going to land. There's a lake of asphalt there that's said to be bigger and better quality than the one in Trinidad, but very few people know about it yet.

"And there's an enormous fruit trade to be developed, as well as mineral deposits that are believed to be tremendously valuable.

"The gov'nor's been interested in the thing ever since the discoveries were first made, and he's done the most of the financing as near as I can find out. Anyhow, he's going to swing the whole thing now if he finds it's all right. That's what he's taking this trip for, and he's taking me along to keep watch of his interests after he goes back.

"Now my idea is this: It ought to be possible for somebody back in New York to copper the game, if he can keep in touch with me. I don't yet know just how it's to be done, but it'll be easy after I get hold of the details and know how he's going to work it. If you and I play both ends against the middle, as we can do if you go back when he does, we can clear up a few millions between us, and I won't have to ask him for everything I'm to have for the rest of my life."

"It looks good," said Blair gravely, "but it's pretty vague. I'm free to say that I'd like to make the millions if it can be done as easily as you think, but from what I've always heard about your governor it isn't easy or safe to play against him in his own game. He's rather in the habit of winning. I'm inclined to think if I were in your place I'd rather back him than copper his bets."

"That's what the ordinary man would do every time," said Somers. "It's the safe play, and it would undoubtedly be easy for me, but that's the trouble. It is his game, and he hogs it. If there

was any hope of getting in with him as a partner I would play it that way.

"But not in a thousand years would he take a partner, and never in the world would he leave me his business, let alone his pile. I know him like a book. He uses everybody for chips, and he thinks I'm a white one at that. As long as I'm useful to him he pays me well enough, and of course I live at home and have everything there is going. I will say for him that he isn't stingy nor mean about anything as long as I'm willing to play second fiddle and take his orders like he expects everybody to do. I can't complain about that, and, as I say, the average man wouldn't ask for anything more.

"But that kind of a game doesn't suit me a little bit. I'm not an average man by a long shot. You can see that for yourself."

"I really don't think you are," murmured Blair, and the boy beamed with pleasure at the compliment.

"I don't propose to be anybody's pawn. I'm out for Roy Somers all the time, and he'll find out before he's much older that I'm just as big a man as he is. Now what do you say? Remember, I'm offering you the opportunity of a lifetime."

"I'll think it over," said Blair. "You realize, of course, that this is all a surprise to me, and you don't propose anything very definite, but the general proposition is certainly attractive."

"It'll be definite enough as soon as I know where we're at," reported the other confidently. "I expected you'd be surprised naturally, but I've been thinking it over all the morning. You may think I'm pretty swift, and I am when I get going, but I never do anything of importance without mature deliberation, and when the idea struck me I considered it carefully from every possible angle. I've got it all doped out now, excepting what we'll have to do. When I've made up my mind about that you'll hear from me fast enough. I'm some little lightning bug when I'm in action."

"That's my motto," said Blair admiringly. "Be always quick, but never precipitate. There'll be something doing if we really come together in the right way."

"Bet your life!" exclaimed Somers delightedly. "Shake!"

He extended his hand, and Blair shook it. Then Somers went away.

CHAPTER IX.

CASPAR FELDMAN SEEKS CAPITAL.

It was never entirely clear, even in the minds of those who make a specialty of poking around among the obscure and half-forgotten facts of history, how the kingdom of Portugal had obtained title to the possession of the island of Santa Clara. Still less did anybody pretend to understand why that title had remained unchallenged during the time when the various parts of the West Indies were being eagerly picked up by the other powers of Europe and colonial governments were being established to the material advantage of the gracious sovereigns who vouchsafed the benefits of their imperial mastery to the unfortunate natives.

Whatever the determining causes were—and nobody on board the good ship *Queen* was particularly interested in so remote an inquiry as would have been necessary to discover them—the fact remained that no one had ever disputed the traditional right of Portugal to control the affairs of Santa Clara.

Portuguese control may have been undertaken originally with energy. History is strangely vague on that point. But whatever enthusiasm may have existed in the mind of the home government at the time of the acquisition of the colony must have died out speedily, since there is no record of any determined effort to exploit the island, and

the very existence of its considerable resources seemed to have been forgotten or ignored by the world at large up to the time when an irresponsible German student, named Caspar Feldman, feeding his wanderlust, prowled all over the place for the better part of a year.

Landing on the island with no definite purpose in his mind beyond the desire to acquaint himself with out-of-the-way places and unfamiliar people, the explorer was first impressed with the curious mixture of civilized luxury and barbaric simplicity that was observable there.

The government, what there was of it, seemed to be a benevolent despotism directed by a white-haired gentleman named Don Luis Rodriguez. So far as that magnate was personally concerned, the sole object of maintaining a government appeared to be the conservation of his own dignity and comfort.

Caspar Feldman, having seen for himself more of what there was on the island than Don Luis and his predecessors had ever found out, resolved to unlock the treasure house and extract therefrom a sufficiency of wealth to satisfy the most inordinate avarice. But the only key which would unlock it was capital, and he had no capital. Obviously his next step must be to get some, and with that in view he went to New York.

Presenting himself at one of the little windows in the Ninety-third National Bank, he said quietly to the clerk inside: "I wish to open an account here, but before making a formal application I would like to have a few words with the president, Mr. Churchill, I believe."

"That will be quite unnecessary," said the clerk pleasantly. "Any details that you——"

"Pardon me," said Feldman. "I consider it quite necessary. The account will be a very large one, running up in the millions, and there are preliminaries necessary which I do not care to discuss with any one else. It may be that he will not care to carry the account, and if so I will have to go elsewhere; but the people I represent will not be satisfied unless I see him personally."

"In that case," said the clerk doubtfully, and then he hesitated.

Feldman looked at him steadily, and saw the hesitation. "Perhaps I had better go elsewhere," he said quietly, and turned on his heel.

"One moment!" said the clerk hastily. It was one thing to trip up an unknown stranger with red tape, but it was quite another to turn away a possible deposit of millions.

"Mr. Churchill is very busy," he said, "but if you will give me your card I will send it to him."

"Blunder No. 1," said Feldman to himself. "I will certainly have a card when I call at the next place. He had never had a card in his life, and had given no thought to what might be an important detail.

Inwardly he raged, but his face was untroubled as he calmly said: "Just tell him it is Mr. Feldman. Caspar Feldman, of Santa Clara."

His manner was convincing, and the clerk hurried away. Returning shortly, he said, "This way, please," and opened the door of the president's private office.

"Mr. Feldman?" said the banker inquiringly.

"Yes, sir."

"What can I do for you?" motioning toward a chair.

Feldman seated himself deliberately. "I want ten million dollars," he said.

"There is nothing unusual in that," said the other.

"No, but I have an unusual reason for wanting it, and an unusual proposition to make."

"Supposing we begin with the proposition," said Churchill, smiling. He was

not too busy, it appeared, to amuse himself.

"I propose that you shall form the Santa Clara Improvement Company with a cash capital of that amount, and that you shall give me an interest in the company in return for my services."

"I'm willing to admit that the proposition is unusual, especially as coming from an utter stranger," said Churchill, smiling still more broadly, "but it might be well to know something about Santa Clara first. I never even heard of it."

So Feldman got his opening. There was nothing settled that day. He had not expected that there would be. But after the half hour which Churchill most unexpectedly found he could spare to this most interesting stranger, he arranged for a further interview, and then for another and another, till presently the formation of the Santa Clara Improvement Company was decided upon, and a careful investigation of Feldman's story was begun. Pending this, no bargain was made with Feldman, but when, after months of inquiry, it was found that he had understated instead of exaggerating the facts, a mutually satisfactory arrangement was made between him and the company.

He had made no mistake in going to John Churchill. The company was ready to begin business, and John Churchill was the company. Roy Somers was right when he said that the banker always played a lone hand.

CHAPTER X.

CONSPIRACY.

The conference between Don Luis and Mr. John Churchill which occurred soon after the latter's arrival at Santa Clara was entirely satisfactory to both parties. A liberal allowance from the prospective profits of the Santa Clara Improvement Company was arranged for the maintenance of the government of the island, and the dignity and authority of the government were duly recognized, so that the haughty potentate, who listened to the preliminary proposals with some indifference and more skepticism, was not only convinced of the benefits of the proposed enterprise, but was happily relieved of monetary anxiety.

On the other hand, Mr. Churchill, as the representative of the company which was in reality composed of himself, was assured of a free foot in the legitimate exploitation of the resources of the island without competition, so long as he should continue to observe the stipulations of the contract he had signed. To him the agreement which was reached at the conference was the final step in the arrangement of his plans. The actual operation of those plans under the contract remained yet in the future.

No single event had occurred since the original Don Luis had assumed the vice regency of the new Portuguese possession, which was felt to be of so great importance in the history of the island, as this new enterprise promised to be. Don Luis, much inflated with a sense of his own boldness and sagacity in having accomplished so great benefits to himself and incidentally to his realm, ordained a festival in honor of the occasion.

It was therefore that those passengers on the *Queen* who had gone ashore at Santa Clara found themselves, after a time, in the midst of much merrymaking. Things happened, however, before the merrymaking began. The ship had gone on her way to complete her regular trip, having landed at Santa Clara, contrary to previous custom, by arrangement with Churchill, and was to return for him and his party later on. Blair had gone ashore when they did, because of certain unsolved questions that gave him much concern, and Freel had also landed because Blair did. There had been some confusion in the

matter of finding suitable accommodations for them, there being no hotel on the island; but Don Luis, on learning of their arrival, had ordered that suitable arrangements should be made for the entertainment of all of them, supposing them all to be of one party and all concerned in the matter he was to discuss with Mr. Churchill. They all found themselves, therefore, speedily and comfortably installed for a stay the continuance of which depended solely on their own pleasure.

Blair's quarters suited him admirably. It happened that a comfortable house had been built some years before as a residence for the younger Don Luis, the next in succession to the family estate, and had been abandoned by that gentleman following his marriage. Since that time it had been unoccupied, but Blair was assigned to it, and a suitable retinue of servants took immediate charge of it and of him.

His surprise at finding himself the recipient of such unexpected hospitality was as nothing to Alec Freel's amazement when he learned that he, too, was a guest of the governor general.

"Gee, but this is great!" he said, when he called on Blair the day after their arrival. "I've been stickin' pins in myself all day to see whether I was awake or havin' a hop dream. I never looked for nothin' like it till after I croaked, an' at that I never had no great hopes o' goin' to heaven. There's one thing gets my goat pretty bad, though. I can't understand a bloomin' thing these dagos say, an' the niggers is just as bad. They seem to know what you want, though, an' as far as I've seen there isn't anything nailed down. If you want it, you take it; an' so far nobody's asked me to pay for anything. Maybe I'll wake up when they put in the bill."

Blair had had his own troubles at first in failing to understand what was being done; but the handsome young gentleman who approached him as he stood near the boat landing in some perplexity proved to have some knowledge of English and had explained matters with great courtesy.

He introduced himself as Don Enrique, and said that he had been instructed by his highness Don Luis to look after the comfort of the travelers who were doing Santa Clara the great honor of making a friendly visit. Advance tidings had reached his highness of the intention of Señor Churchill to make such a visit, and his highness was desirous of extending unstinted hospitality to Señor Churchill and to all his party.

"But there is an error," Blair had objected. "I have no acquaintance with Mr. Churchill, and it was only by chance that I found myself traveling on the same ship with him and his party. I travel by the direction of my physician, and am only desirous of finding complete rest and quiet for a time. The great beauty of Santa Clara attracted me, and I came ashore instead of pursuing the journey farther. Mr. Churchill will tell you that he knows nothing about me."

"That is of the importance of nothing," replied Don Enrique, suavely hiding his conviction that Blair was in reality an ally of Churchill's and was concealing the fact with some ulterior purpose in mind. "You have done us the honor of coming," he continued, "and, as a stranger of distinction, you become the guest of his highness. If your desire is for the quiet, I will place you in the villa of Don Luis the younger, now happily vacant, and your privacy will be respected as fully as you can wish. You will be welcome in the excess whenever you wish to mingle with such poor society as we can offer you, but in the meantime you may rest as quietly as you can possibly desire."

"It's poor play to discard from a flush

when it comes pat in the deal," thought Blair, while the other was speaking, and he made suitable acknowledgment of the consideration that was being shown to him, finding himself shortly afterward in ideal comfort.

The intrusion of Freel, when that gentleman came in unexpectedly, was an annoyance which he took no pains to conceal. "I have told you," he said brusquely, "that I do not propose to become interested in anything whatever for a time. At present I am not concerned in anything you may have to say, and you will please fade away. If I want you, I will let you know."

"I know, Mr. Blair," said Freel humbly, "but I really thought I'd bust wide open if I couldn't talk to somebody, an' I just had to butt in for a few words. It looks to me as if we could walk through this crowd here like a couple o' cops through a Chinatown mob, as soon as you're ready for business, and I wanted to remind you of our——"

"Get out of here! Do you understand that?" exclaimed Blair, greatly exasperated. And Mr. Freel stepped outside.

Not long, however, did the ensuing quietude continue. In a little while Roy Somers appeared. It was evident that he was not to have the privacy he desired, and Blair groaned in spirit, but he was not yet prepared to treat Somers with such rudeness as he had shown to Freel, and he greeted him courteously enough though without cordiality.

"The old man's gone up to talk to the grand panjandrum of the island," said the caller, taking a chair near Blair's and offering his cigar case, "and he took a copy of the contract he's hopin' to have signed. I got a look at it while he was takin' a dip in the surf, an', say, it's a peach. If he gets the old guy to sign it, he'll come pretty near owning the entire island. Looks to me like it was goin' to be far an' away the biggest thing he ever put over if he does it, an' I reckon he will. He's a whale when it comes to makin' people do what he wants 'em to, an' I can see the fine Italian hand of Jim Livingston in the wording of that contract."

"Do you mean Livingston the Wall Street lawyer?" asked Blair. "God knows I asked for fish," he added to himself humorously, as he found he was being compelled in spite of his honest intentions to feel an interest in events which he realized as contrary to the doctor's orders.

"That same," said Somers. "He's the old man's counsel, and what he doesn't know about contracts isn't written in the law books. And if there was any concession that he forgot in drawing up this one, the old man must have reminded him of it before they made the final draft. There won't anything get away if the grand panjandrum signs, and it's dollars to doughnuts he'll sign before the old man leaves him. Of course, he may take time to look it over, but if he finds anything to kick about, he's a good one. The way it reads you'd think it was drawn up for the special purpose of doing him good."

"Perhaps it was," suggested Blair, with a smile; but the other was too excited to catch the quip.

"Not for one minute!" he said earnestly. "The way it looks, this'll be the biggest thing that's been sprung on Wall Street in fifty years. I think I can see the old man now, watching the ticker after he's got the Santa Clara Improvement Company listed, and with you in New York and me down here we can play both ends against the middle in a way to raise the dead. I tell you, man, it's the chance of the century."

"I reckon I'll be back in New York, all right, pretty soon, if things go on like this," said Blair. "I'll be looking for some sequestered spot in Longacre Square where I can sit down and listen to the grass growing."

"Don't be a fool!" said the younger

man impatiently. "You talk as if you never intended to do anything any more. Wake up for a while and I'll put you on the inside of the biggest game you ever played. Think of the rake-off we can make if we know when to copper a bet once in a while."

Blair did think of it in spite of himself, and the thought appealed to him.

"I told you before," he said, abandoning his jesting manner, "that it looks good to me. Money always does if there is enough of it. I'll sit in, all right, but it's your deal first. How do you propose to begin?"

"It's too soon to say," said the other, "but not too soon for an understanding. First, if we play together, it's to be fifty-fifty on everything. That's more than fair, seeing that I'm the one to get all the information; but, as I said, I can't play a lone hand with safety, and I want you to be satisfied."

"That'll be satisfactory to me," said Blair.

"Good!" said the other. "It certainly ought to be. Next, we must fix up a code. There'll have to be letters between us, but with a code of a few words it won't be necessary to sign anything. The letters'll be slow, of course, but you'll get yours as soon as the old man gets his. I reckon he'll have a cable laid before long, but in the meantime he'll be as far from here as you will. He won't stay here long, and you'd better stay till after he's gone back. That'll give us time to go over the whole matter after I know just what he expects me to do. He'll have to give me instructions, if he leaves me here, as I'm sure he's going to, and you'll know just what they are.

"Then, when you go back to New York, you can watch the Street, and I can watch the actual developments here. There'll be a prospectus issued, and the stock'll be put on the market as soon as everything is ready. The old man is going to reach out for quick profits, the same as we are. He's too old to sit down and wait for the actual returns to the company, and there isn't a man in New York knows how to rig the market better than he does. The trading'll be heavy from the start, if he puts his name in, and I think that'll be his game.

"If he doesn't, it'll be easier yet for us. Knowing the inside of the game from me, you'll be able to knock the tar out of the market with tips that I'll give you, and buy 'in' away below actual values. You'll need capital, of course, to do that, but I can put you wise on that. There's a dozen men in the Street would like nothing better than to put a crimp in the old man."

"All very good," said Blair, who had listened attentively, "but it doesn't get us much farther than we were before. It's all in the air, as far as I can see now."

"Yes," said Somers. "It's all in the air at present, of course, but you ought to see the air is full of it. We've come to an understanding, and you can see for yourself the possibilities are great. We're ready to act when the time comes, and unless I'm greatly mistaken we won't have to wait long."

"Well, acting is my middle name," said Blair, "when it comes to that. I can see the possibilities, and you won't have to wait for me when the time comes. And now I'll change my mind about a smoke and take one of those remarkably good cigars of yours."

CHAPTER XI.

INDECISION.

"When you are playing system," said Blair to himself, on the evening of the ball with which Don Luis began his festival, "it may or may not be wise to place a bet outside. According to the doctor's system, that ballroom is probably about the last place on earth for me to be in to-night, but it looks to me

like it was about the one best bet for me to go. Maybe it will smash the system to bits, but what if it does?"

Always afterward, the memory of that night in Santa Clara remained in Blair's mind with the semblance of a vivid dream, as real as the mirage, as delightful as romance, as bizarre as a musical comedy, as vague in details as the hopes of youth, yet distinct withal as a cameo as to the one experience which separated it widely from all other nights within his recollection.

As he recalled it, there was first a confused sequence of trivialities. Don Enrique greeted him with punctilious formality, yet with warm welcome, at the entrance to the spacious mansion in which Don Luis dwelt, and conducted him forthwith to the presence of that august ruler, who greeted him with gracious manner in a pompous speech which Blair only half understood.

Then followed a presentation to Don Luis' stately consort, a white-haired lady who smiled benignantly as Blair made his obeisance, but who, to his relief, said nothing. The ceremony was over and he was foot-free. What would have been an amusing and interesting experience under other circumstances was no more to him at the time than the tuning up of the orchestra as he looked forward to the great event of the evening. That would be his meeting with *her*.

And there was much else that came before that. Much that would have delighted him keenly had he not been so utterly given up to his anticipation of that one thing. The great hall in which he found himself was thrown completely open at one end, and the view of the gorgeous tropical garden beyond, sparkling with a myriad lights and radiantly beautiful under the flood of silvery splendor pouring downward from the full moon, completed a vista that would have satisfied the most critical eye. Nor was this all of the picture.

Of colors there was a bewildering variety, each seeming brighter than the others, shifting kaleidoscopically as the company danced to the music of such an orchestra as Blair had never heard before. Mingled in harmonious strains came sweet, shrill sounds from rude native instruments, played with native skill, and to the sensuous invitation of the music a throng of dancers responded joyously, treading measures of such intricacy as to confuse the eye, and winding in and out of one great tableau after another with faultless rhythm and rare grace.

The *tout ensemble* was that of the stage setting of an extravaganza, and he stood for a time half dazed by the unreality of it, when, like a stage hand walking among ballet dancers in view of the audience, came Somers, clad, as he was himself, in an ordinary Broadway walking suit, grotesquely conspicuous in all the brave array of gay apparel that adorned the company. And he braced himself as for an ordeal.

The beginning of it seemed commonplace enough Convoyed by Somers, he made his way across the polished floor to the corner where Mr. Churchill stood chatting with his wife and daughter, who were, both of them, looking with frank delight at the spectacle. There he was presented to each of them in turn, in the conventional form, and shook hands with Mr. Churchill and bowed to the ladies with precisely the correct expression of obligation for the courtesy. Outwardly self-possessed, he gave no sign of the emotion that agitated him, and he was conscious of having made a favorable impression.

Mr. Churchill's first keen glance of appraisal evidently detected nothing unworthy, for he spoke pleasantly and even cordially, as one off guard and unaffectedly pleased to meet a man of his own city in a party of foreigners. There had been no meeting between them on shipboard, for the voyage had been too

short to break down the reserve that both maintained; and he accepted the new acquaintance at face value, though Blair was fully aware that his footing was only tentative. It was enough for his present purpose, however, and he was careful not to endanger it by any undue advance.

The unspoken approbation of both mother and daughter was more frankly evident. The quiet, handsome man whose outward appearance was irreproachable and whose manner was polished commended himself immediately to their favor. Suavely and pleasantly they joined in the conversation, though Blair could never remember afterward what it was about. All that he was really conscious of at the time was the music of Ethel's voice which, to his ear, was sweeter than dulcimers.

Standing with an appearance of ease, he was presently aware that Somers had gone away with Don Enrique to seek a partner for the dance, and that Mr. Churchill was proposing a stroll in the garden. Thus, without formality or any spoken arrangement, he found himself walking beside the goddess of his dreams straight into fairyland, while Mr. and Mrs. Churchill walked ahead, almost within touch, yet already a million miles away. His hour had come. No motion, word, or look of the whole of it ever escaped his later recollection.

Looking up at him with a directness that bespoke the perfect poise of her manner, she said: "It seems as if we were in another world, does it not?"

"It is another world," he replied. "Not only is it outside of all experience, but it is out of place in the centuries. Humanity has forgotten or ignored the existence of it, and has journeyed along the path of progress, while this place has remained in another age. There is enchantment here. Dryads and fairies people the forests, and nymphs have guarded the shores against intrusion. It is a rash thing we have done to come here, and yet I could find it in my heart to stay forever, if the nights are all like this."

"I can almost believe it," she said laughingly. "Certainly it is true in a sense. My father says these people have been asleep for ages, and are still living in a dream. But he says, too, that they will waken soon, and that Santa Clara will be a place of great importance."

"It is probably inevitable," said he, "but does it not seem a pity? Would it not be better for Santa Clara, and better for the rest of the world, that there should remain some place unspotted by the fingers of greed, offering a refuge and a home for the discarded myths that civilization scoffs at? I would have laughed at the question last week on Broadway, but to-night it seems almost serious. I never realized before that there was so much truth in magic."

"I never thought there was any," she retorted. "They do not teach it in the schools any more." And she laughed again, half mischievously.

"There are very many things of great importance," he said gravely, "that are not taught in the schools, and magic is one of them. It is better to learn that than some of the others, but magic cannot be taught, and unhappily some of the other things can."

"You do not look like a poet, Mr. Blair," she said, still smiling, "but you talk like one. Surely no one in the twentieth century takes magic seriously excepting the poets."

"I have reminded you," said he, "that we are not now in the twentieth century, but there are times in almost every man's life when he is a poet. I believe I could write a sonnet to-night."

"Don't," said the maiden earnestly. "If you should, I would be compelled by common courtesy to read it, or, worse yet, to listen to it, and sonnets are very trying. I never quite dared

to say that in school, but to-night the spell is on me, too. I can say anything."

"I am an excellent listener."

"It is more than most poets are," was the retort, "and yet I shouldn't say that. I have not met all of them."

"It is the privilege of your sex," he said, "to generalize on a slender basis of fact. You may have met a few."

"I do not know," said she, with spirit, "that my sex has a monopoly of that trait. You are on dangerous ground. We women are taking ourselves rather seriously nowadays."

"I think I realize the danger of my position clearly," he returned, with a smile that she misinterpreted, "but, believe me, it does not lie in the direction you indicate. There is a difference in the masculine and the feminine habit of thought when it is a question of generalizing, though you may not have discovered it as yet; but there is no reflection on your sex, even implied, in what I said. It is the difference between us that compels the admiration of men for women. Instead of being an imputation, to say that you generalize as you do, it is an expression of surprise that you should arrive at the truth by short cuts in the way you do, and is therefore a compliment."

"That is more ingenious than it is ingenuous," she said. "I do not undervalue compliments, but I like to swallow them whole. If I have to stop to chew them, I find the flavor is likely to disappear."

She spoke playfully. Her eyes were sparkling, and her face, somewhat irregular but wholly winsome, shone with merriment as she looked at him with the keen delight of a skilled fencer. She was enjoying the verbal encounter.

Nevertheless she had left an opening, and Blair, himself no mean hand with the foils, took instant advantage. His thrust was too rapid for her to parry, and he delivered it point-blank.

"Then listen to one that cannot be misunderstood," he said, with all the earnestness he could muster. "I am thinking of you here and now as the one woman in all the world. I am asking absolutely nothing from you excepting that you shall realize that fact. You know nothing about me, but you will know much hereafter. What effect that knowledge will have I do not know. I do not even dare to hope that it will be favorable. It is likely that you may not give me a second thought afterward, but I am going to play fair with you from the start. The time may come when I can say much more, but it is not now. I do not forget that I am an utter stranger. It may be that I shall always remain a stranger to you, but it will not be because of any indifference on my part."

While he spoke, he kept his eyes intently fixed on hers, and he was skilled in reading expression. Without missing a single change, he saw her sudden start of surprise at his bold beginning pass into incredulity, then to displeasure, then to wonder, and finally settle into inscrutability; but her look remained steady, and he was satisfied, though he could not interpret her attitude.

She seemed about to make some reply, but checked the impulse, and, without a word, stepped forward to her mother's side. His hour had passed.

Advancing beside her, he chatted for a few moments with her parents; then, excusing himself, left the place with a single glance into the eyes that met his with the same inscrutable expression.

"I have opened the pot," he said to himself, as he walked toward his quarters. "Now, how many cards am I going to draw?"

CHAPTER XII.

PARTNERS.

Mr. Freel's experiences in Santa Clara were somewhat depressing after the first day or two.

Being an ebullient person, with well-developed social instincts, he had strong cravings for companionship, and was not overparticular in the choice of associates. Mingling freely with his fellow beings was to him the principal enjoyment of life, regardless of the character or standing of those with whom he mingled. Being alone was a hardship.

In Santa Clara he found himself very much alone. The manner of the people by whom he was surrounded was not unfriendly, and they manifested no desire to avoid his society, but on the contrary seemed rather to be anxious to seek it, but he was wholly unable to communicate with them by any means outside of the language of signs; and he displayed no greater aptitude in understanding that than he did in gathering the meaning of their fluent words. Nor did he succeed very well in making himself understood.

He was therefore isolated, and he found the condition almost intolerable. Outside of the five persons who had landed from the *Queen* when he did, he was unable to find any one with whom he could interchange ideas with any satisfaction, and there were difficulties with regard to each one of those five.

To approach Mr. Churchill, or either of the ladies with the thought of conversing with them would be, as he realized, an act of presumption to which he was not equal. Somers was out of the question because of the circumstances of their encounter in the smoking room. So far as he was concerned, there was no ill feeling remaining after that trouble strong enough to bar acquaintance. The incident seemed trivial to him, and he was ready enough to forget it; but when he approached that self-centered youth, as he did one morning with entire willingness to ignore the past, he was met with such disdainful silence that he would have renewed the quarrel instantly had it not been for the understanding he had of Blair's attitude in the matter. Remembering that, he choked back his indignation with considerable difficulty and passed on in silence.

Remained Blair. It was true that Blair had shown no desire for his company, but that fact seemed unimportant to him in view of the necessity which impelled him to communicate with somebody; and he therefore cast about for some pretext on which he could again approach the man he respected so highly, and after a time he found one.

Among the open secrets of the island was one that he discovered with no great difficulty in the solitary rambling which was his sole available resource in the way of amusement. This was the existence of a somewhat pretentious gambling house, which seemed to be a favorite resort of the most of the white men and mestizos of the little community.

Being himself a professional, however, he was cautious, and was by no means minded to enter any of the contests that he saw going on without first familiarizing himself with the ways of the company and observing for himself the degree of skill with which the various games were played.

Some of these games were strange to him, well acquainted as he was with all those that are commonly played in New York; but others he knew, and, knowing them, he was shy about joining them without preliminary study.

The establishment was larger than he would naturally have expected to find in so small a community, and, though it was less gaudily equipped and furnished than seemed natural to him, it offered a wide latitude of choice in the variety of different games that were going on, all of which seemed to find favor with many players, for the rooms were crowded on each of the three successive nights when he visited it

as a spectator only. No one asked him to play, but no one objected to his presence or showed annoyance at his scrutiny.

There was a faro table there, but Freel, after watching the dealers through a dozen or more deals, felt no desire to play faro. There was a roulette wheel, but roulette was a game that had no great attraction for him at any time. When he saw that the wheel carried both the o and the oo, he looked no longer at that.

At three different tables, however, he saw games of poker in progress, and to these he gave close attention, thinking at first only of the possibilities there might be if he should sit in. Then, as he watched, he thought of the greater possibilities there were if he could join one of these parties together with a confederate, and immediately he thought of Blair. It was not his way to act precipitately at any time, and he continued to watch until he had satisfied himself that, although these men played desperately for stakes that seemed high, even to him, they were playing fairly. He could not detect any sleight of hand, and there was no evidence, even to his trained perception, of anything that suggested team play. Each man stood squarely on his own ability and luck, and played well.

Had he known as much of Blair as he fancied he did, it is highly probable that Freel would have hesitated longer than he did before approaching him the third time, after the dismissal which had terminated his second interview. Or, had he been of a sensitive nature, the manner of that dismissal would have been likely to deter him from any further attempt of the kind. Being, however, too well used to rough language to give much heed to it, and knowing Blair only as an expert member of the same fraternity that he himself belonged to, he had little doubt that he was the bearer of welcome news, when he called again, the morning after Don Luis' ball, to tell what he had learned of the poker game in which he and Blair, by playing together, would be assured of great profits.

"It's a cinch, Mr. Blair," he said earnestly. "You and me c'n play horse with those guys. All we need is a few signals to let each other know when we want any help, an' we c'n skin 'em alive. You wouldn't hardly have to stack the cards."

Blair listened to him in silence, and looked at him steadily, but it would have taken a much better judge than Freel was to have told what he was thinking.

"Very well," was what he said, after some deliberation. "If you and I are going to do anything together, I don't know that we could find a better chance; but we must first have a thorough understanding. How much do you think you know about poker?"

"Well," said Freel, with considerable confidence, "I told you already I don't pretend to be in the same class with you. I wouldn't like to sit in against you for blood in a two-handed game, but I'm a fairly good player, Mr. Blair. I don't often lose, and when I do it isn't much; but when I win, I generally get a good stake. And I never lost out yet if I had a pal in the game. Me an' Sam Canter done mighty well together down on the East Side for over a year before he done me dirt, but it ain't everybody you can trust, Mr. Blair."

"That's true," said Blair, with such an emphasis that Freel replied immediately to the plain implication.

"Now, Mr. Blair," he said, still more earnestly, "you don't have to say anything like that to me. In the first place, I wouldn't have no object in throwing you down. You know as well as I do that I can do a blame sight better standing in with you than I can alone, an'

you'd ought to know I wouldn't dare to play double with you if I wanted to."

"No, I don't really believe you would," said Blair, with a slight smile, "but listen: The reason I asked you how much you knew about poker was to learn whether you knew the real secret of the game. Do you know where every card in the deck is after the shuffle?"

"Not unless I shuffle 'em myself; and even then I wouldn't pretend to say I knew where every one of 'em is. I can stack 'em fairly well, but I don't believe anybody can do as well as that."

"You are mistaken," said Blair. "There are only fifty-two cards in the deck, and if a man practices long enough and has head enough, he can do almost anything with them. You've seen jugglers on the stage, haven't you?"

"Yes, but they tell me them guys don't generally play no game of poker at all."

"I've heard that myself," said Blair, "but the reason of that is that they don't practice it. You let a man with natural talent as a juggler give all his attention to those fifty-two cards for a few years, and think what the possibilities are!"

"I see," said Freel humbly. "I can do a little juggling on my own, but I wouldn't be one, two, three with a man that was a real master. I reckon maybe you don't need me, after all, Mr. Blair. I knew you was an expert, but I didn't know you was as good as all that."

"I haven't said I was as good as that," replied Blair, smiling again. "What I wanted to do was to remind you of what could be done with fifty-two pieces of pasteboard by a man who practices with them long enough and has the proper talent to begin with. I haven't said, either, whether I needed a pal in the game or not; but even if a man doesn't really need an accomplice, there is often a distinct advantage in having some one at the table to help him boost the betting when he wants to swell the pot."

"You needn't say no more!" exclaimed Freel, cheerfully eager. "I get you now, Mr. Blair. Just let me know when to come in, and I'll do the boosting, all right, all right."

"The doctor has told me that I have been smoking altogether too much," observed Blair, "and I have almost given it up, but I've always had the habit of keeping a cigar in my mouth while I'm playing. I don't smoke it, but I find that if I fix my mind on it when I want to avoid showing anything by my expression, it helps considerably. If you should see me strike a match some time, and light up, you may understand from that that I want more money in the pot."

"That ought to be enough," said Freel, thoroughly satisfied. "Will you come around to-night?"

"Yes."

"And what's the understanding? Is it fifty-fifty, or is that more than I ought to have?"

"We'll split even on winnings," said Blair, "but you needn't expect me to stand half if you lose. I can't take any chances on you till I've tried you out."

"You don't have to," said Freel, laughing, "but I'm not scared to death about losing." And he took his leave, highly delighted with having reached an understanding.

"I guess perhaps I won't be bothered with that insect much more," said Blair to himself, after the other had gone. And, mindful of the doctor's orders, he lay down for a nap.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The second and concluding part of this novel will appear, two weeks hence, in the POPULAR on sale July 7th.

With the Aid of the "English"

A BASEBALL STORY

By N. B. Beasley

Author of "Behind the Plate," "Somebody Squealed," Etc.

THE third strike was called on the batter, and, flinging his club away from him, he slouched toward the visiting team's bench. But as he walked, other men were running toward the center of the diamond. Jerry Monaghan, the Hilltops' pitching star, was holding his right arm, as in pain. His features were twisted because of his agony, and in a voice that choked suspiciously he told his manager and his catcher that something had snapped in his elbow as he released the ball. He tried to work his arm, but couldn't. The club's trainer examined the elbow, shook his head sadly, and led Monaghan away.

That night the sporting extras of the evening newspapers made a sensation of the story that Jerry Monaghan, young star of the Hilltops, had stretched the ligaments to the elbow of his right arm—his pitching arm. Also they told of how utterly impossible it would be for Monaghan to enter a game again within a month, if ever.

Days grew into weeks and weeks lengthened into a month. July had passed. August, with its smothering heat, suffocated New York. Still Jerry Monaghan was absent from the game. The score cards still carried his name, but to the fickle baseball public he was only a memory. The arm that had pitched New York's Hilltops to many victories had lost its cunning.

Monaghan no longer appeared in front of the stands prior to the games. He associated but little with his fellow players. He was inclined to sensitiveness, and he abhorred sympathetic remarks. He preferred to remain on the bench and to listen to the chatter of the new players who had already begun to come in from the leagues of the West, the South, and the North. He saw the old stars—men who had outlived their usefulness in the real activities of the game, and who were now carried as scouts—report to Manager Higgins. He listened when they told of the young players, and particularly the young pitchers, they had watched in the "bushes." Once he distinctly heard old Charley Collins whisper that "here was a fellow who would take Monaghan's place."

Collins involuntarily glanced around as he spoke, but he looked rapidly away. He mistook the flame in Monaghan's eyes for a glimmer of appeal.

Baseball is an exacting taskmaster. Monaghan, big, strong, keen of wit, and generous, had been with the Hilltops less than three years. He had given well of his six feet of height and his one hundred and eighty-five pounds of power that his club might be a winner. His work had ever been sensational, but his experience—it wasn't enough to make him a valuable instructor to the other pitchers in the event of his losing effectiveness against opposing teams. Monaghan knew his game, knew it as one that did not seek sympathy; neither did it grant it.

The day when he was called upon came at last.

Like the other players, he reported for morning practice. He had tried for weeks to recover strength in these conditioning work-outs, and there were times when he believed he was accomplishing his purpose. This morning he was pitching to the early arrivals when Higgins appeared on the field.

The manager called:

"Jerry! Jerry Monaghan! Better lay off work this morning. Give your arm a rest. It seems to be coming all right."

For just a moment Monaghan wondered. Then he understood. On other mornings Higgins had been anxious to see him work. He had been anxious to learn whether the arm was recovering. The Hilltops were in the thickest of the fight for the pennant. The addition of Monaghan to the workers of the pitching staff meant, probably, the winning of it. If Monaghan didn't show, arrangements could be made for his disposal.

Just the preceding day Higgins had given his word to the regulars that he would eliminate all useless material. He would do this that each player's share in the world's series money would be a larger one, providing the pennant was won. Higgins had brought up Monaghan's name, a discussion had followed; some of the players were for the retention of the pitcher, others opposed. Finally a vote was taken. Monaghan was voted out. Afterward, Higgins had comforted himself with the thought that he could get Kirby from the Montgomery club, of the Southern League, in exchange for the disabled pitcher, and a certain additional sum in cash. He recalled that Collins had told him that Kirby would take Monaghan's place.

Monaghan knew nothing of the plan. For weeks he had not been a member to the meetings of the regulars. He had not been invited.

He ate little that noon. His mind was absorbed with the prospect of a return to the real fight, but his heart was heavy, for he felt his strength would not last through a close contest. Mentally he prayed for an easy victory.

He felt grateful to Higgins because he had been assigned to face the Lambs, a team that in his best days had never troubled him.

The practice work was concluded, Monaghan, in warming up, had been cheered by a welcoming cry from thousands of throats. The early performances of the pitcher were recalled, were repeated from lip to lip. An old friend had returned. A few minutes passed. The preliminaries were gone through with. Higgins drove out his last high foul to the catchers, and——

The game was on. Through the first, the second, and the third innings went Monaghan. The Lambs failed. The spell of Jerry's former self was over them. Then, in the fourth, the strain broke, in part. The Lambs filled the bases. A great defense saved Monaghan, and no runs were scored.

Higgins breathed hard when the runners threatened. He breathed easy again when the side went out. He thought Monaghan's cunning of other days had returned. What he didn't know was: The Lambs had broken his pitcher.

They had found that they could hit him. They had learned that this Monaghan was not the Monaghan who had once been a terror to them. Now he was a poor old man of baseball, a poor old man, who was vainly struggling against tremendous odds, and an unyielding force. Hooper, the first man to face him in the inning that followed, swung confidently at the opening pitch, and drove the ball past second base and into center field for a single. Monaghan, in throwing out that his catcher

might be given a chance to retire Hooper by an unexpected snap to first base, lost control. He couldn't place the ball over the plate, and he passed Walsh.

No one was out. Glowney, the heaviest hitter of the Lambs, was at the plate!

Glowney, despite his batting prowess, had formerly been puzzled by Monaghan's fast ball. Now he swung confidently, in the knowledge that the fast ball was missing. His eyes narrowed as they watched the first pitch sail to one side of the rubber plate. He then tugged at his peaked cap, his foot lifted ever so slightly—the signal that he was going to hit at the next pitch was given to the men on the bases.

The runners were in motion with the throw. They were almost at top speed when Glowney's bat crashed against the ball. A circle of leather shot on a line toward left. It flew away, ever rising, it seemed. Dancy, the Hilltops' left fielder, pursued it to the fence, and his eyes carried an injured expression as they watched it clear the barrier for a home run.

The three Lambs lock-stepped around the bases. On the Hilltops' bench, Manager Higgins shifted the weight of his tobacco from one side of his mouth to the other, gazed at the spikes on his shoes, and declared: "Now watch Monaghan pitch!"

There followed a nightmare of hitting. Every Lamb who stepped to the plate slashed away at the ball, and one who was turned back did go out only because Dancy risked life and limb in snatching a terrific drive from the air. Six runs had been scored and two men were on the bases when Monaghan saw Higgins snap his fingers. Tossing the ball to the third baseman, he obeyed orders, and left the game.

Higgins was occupied watching the relief hurler when Jerry threw his worn glove on the bench. No word of encouragement fell on the pitcher's ears.

That night, Higgins met Monaghan. Hurriedly did he go to the point, hurriedly did he explain. He told Monaghan he was through as a major-league pitcher, and he was sending him out.

Monaghan couldn't believe the words. Here it was August, little more than another month, and the pennant fight would be over. He wanted to be with a pennant winner.

"You don't mean that you're not going to give me another chance!" he cried, after he had mastered his first hot anger.

"That's it."

"And the club going through to the flag——" For Monaghan, like the other players, believed the Hilltops' chance of winning to be of the best.

"I had to do it," returned Higgins. "I didn't want to see you cut off, but we've got to win. I'm getting Kirby, of Montgomery, in exchange," he added as an afterthought.

Quickly Monaghan recalled Collins' words of the few days before. Afterward he hotly asked: "I didn't do anything for the team before—before this happened, did I?" and he pointed to his injured elbow.

Higgins did not answer.

"You're cheating me out of what I have earned—a place on a flag winner and a share in the world's series money."

"You've been paid for your services," retorted Higgins. "Anyway, you're through—up here—Monaghan. No club in the majors wants you. The Class AA teams have all waived. And in Kirby I'm getting a man who will help us. It's a cinch you cannot be of service any more. I'm sorry, but it's a law of baseball."

That was a long speech for Higgins. He finished by handing Monaghan a railroad ticket and an envelope containing green bills that would pay expenses

en route. Then, congratulating himself on the manner in which he had handled a disagreeable task, he left.

The unfairness of it all hurt Monaghan. He had given the Hilltops his best since he had joined them. In his first two years the team had been out of the running for the honors. Had he broken then he wouldn't have cared—so much. This was the first year he had worked on a possible major-league winner. The taking of the flag, the playing in the world's series, the division of the money meant much to him. Much, also, in the way of personal satisfaction. His hopes were riddled now.

"Why pitch? Why play baseball?" he demanded of himself. The answer came in the form of a realization of a neglected education and a knowledge that there was nothing else he could do. At least, nothing else that would pay him the wages he was accustomed to receiving.

The first bitter thoughts passed. The next morning an idea came. And with its coming a purpose was born.

Two days later, he was in Montgomery.

Montgomery, like New York, had its own flag race to figure on. True, the crowds at the games were small in comparison with the crowds of the big city, but the interest was proportionately as large. Montgomery had an outside chance to win—to reach the top. Kirby, its best pitcher, had been taken, and it was up to Monaghan. The hour of Jerry's assignment wasn't, then, far distant. It came. Monaghan was not ready, but he pitched, and he won. He won because his own team hit the opposing pitcher harder and oftener.

The minor leaguers would never have scored on the old Monaghan.

Soon afterward Jerry pitched and won again. The winning read like the story of the first game. Again had he been hit hard, but not hard enough to turn victory away.

The grinding days of the closing stages of the flag race were at hand. Monaghan had become interested in his work. A faint hope quivered and clung within him. The hits taken from his delivery in the second game had not been quite so pronounced as in the first. His hopes and his ambitions deceived him into believing he was regaining his lost effectiveness.

New Orleans was in Montgomery this day. Monaghan was slated as the pitcher, and Monaghan had studied, from the newspapers, the batting strength of the approaching opponents. He had learned that Starr was a left-field hitter; he discovered that Hendryx hit into right almost to the exclusion of the other sections. Northern, he decided, was a free swinger. Those three formed the wrecking crew of the New Orleans club. In his present condition he feared them. But he had gained knowledge. He would work with his outfielders, and he would place them well.

Monaghan never just satisfied himself as to how New Orleans really started once the game was under way. Suffice it to say that a couple of fielding errors put runners on the bases; the three sluggers did the rest. Starr smashed to left for a double; Hendryx put the ball in right center for another double, and Northern laced it over the fence and against an unoffending trolley car for a home run.

That spelled defeat for Montgomery. Also, it caused Monaghan's removal.

The thoughts that assailed him as he walked to the bench in answer to the yelp of Manager Finn were similar to those he had carried when he had been batted from the box and beaten by the Lambs less than two weeks before. Only these thoughts were more bitter; for the Lambs were major leaguers—the New Orleans club was comprised

of old-timers and youngsters coming up. It was in a class several degrees removed from the big leagues.

The game ended. New Orleans won by a top-heavy score, and Monaghan was on his way to the clubhouse when Finn called him aside.

"Monaghan, you're through," he snapped, with unguarded directness.

It was the second time Jerry had heard this sentence. It hurt now, as it had hurt when Higgins had bounced him from the Hilltops.

Finn continued. He was angry, and he said:

"I never got anything but a double cross from the Hilltops in my life, and I'm going to cut our contract. They told me you could win in this league as easy as could Kirby. That's a laugh. I let Kirby go because we needed the money. I got a good price for him—with you thrown in."

"You knew my arm wasn't right," protested Monaghan.

"I know it now, too."

Jerry turned away, and he heard Finn say:

"I can't give you another chance this fall. The season'll close for us in another two weeks. Next spring, maybe, yes, next spring I'll try you again."

The words and their full meaning swept through Jerry's mind. Next spring! That was six months away. Half a year distant. Not another chance this season. Perhaps failure, after all. With failure another shift, one more slip down the ladder. Somewhere somebody had told him that the Waco club of the Texas League was the farming ground of Montgomery. What a drop for a ball player in less than a year! Jerry rebelled. He was only twenty-six years old. At that age other men were just determining their course of life. He had been in the battle for years.

A few months since, and he had been a petted and a pampered star in one of the two fastest leagues in the country. His name had been mentioned along with Johnson and Wood and Mathewson. He had lacked the experience of these men, but the sporting writers had often compared records, and Monaghan had not suffered. He could hardly realize his day had gone. He could not believe he was "through" as a pitcher.

The thoughts of his own failures overcame him.

That night Monaghan learned from a score board in a saloon that New York's Hilltops had won their game of the day. And in the winning had practically cinched their claim to the flag.

Like many another man beset with trouble and disappointment, Monaghan turned to what he thought his only friend. He lost himself in the easiest way, in the maze liquor produces.

It was a shock, this riotous living. It was not until the following morning that realization came to him. This time he was amid strange surroundings. His senses were numbed, but there came the thought that all was not well. He felt his right arm bandaged close to his side; he couldn't see out of one eye, but with the other he caught the shadow of a bandage. He tried to move his feet, but excruciating pain deterred him. The air was heavy with disinfectants.

Jerry moaned in mingled surprise and anguish. The fluff-fluff of skirts, starched skirts, came to his ears. A nurse leaned over his bed. Monaghan glanced up, and a pair of brown eyes gazed right into his. Amazed, he stared; and the face, with its roguish dimple and its lips that expressed concern, drew away.

"Where am I?" he muttered.

The face appeared again, and a slender finger was pressed tightly against two red lips.

"But——"

"You must not talk." This came in a tone that was musical and which disturbed Jerry's whole being.

Women had never attracted Monaghan before. They had never occupied his thoughts. He had never studiously disregarded them, but he had never been interested. He was one of the rare ball players who found no amusement in exchanging small talk with girls at hotel cigar counters or telephone operators. And, like most such men, he fell hardest when seemingly most secure.

This girl was different.

He tried to turn his head again. The nurse, perceiving his efforts, again ordered him to refrain from exertion. She came around the bed to a point where the patient could be watched.

"I want to know what happened," demanded Jerry pettishly. "I want to know"—he started to move, but a twinge of pain prevented him.

"I said you must not talk."

"But I will talk. I'm going to find out why I'm here."

At that instant a door opened. A rush of cooler air filled the room, and a doctor entered.

Jerry complained to him.

"You're here because you've been hurt," answered the physician.

"Interesting," returned Monaghan sarcastically.

The physician flushed.

"Monaghan," he said, "I've given orders for you to be quiet. You must not talk. But I guess it will not hurt you to know that you were hit by a street car last night."

"Street car? Hit?" Faint recollection came to the pitcher. He finished: "Was—I—drunk?"

"You were," came the brief reply.

Monaghan was completely ashamed of himself. The fact that he had looked upon the red of the wine was not the disturbing element. The thought that hurt was that here, in the presence of a person who had the most wonderful pair of brown eyes he had ever seen, a disclosure had been made. He closed his eyes, and he took no heed when the physician found his temperature or listened to his heart, nor was he aroused when his wounds were examined. He wasn't much cheered when he heard the doctor declare that the injuries were not so serious as at first supposed.

Jerry's rugged constitution responded to the call of nature. No bones had been broken in the accident of the night before, but his entire body had been jarred, and the doctor had feared that internal injuries had been sustained. The days were not many before he was able to move from his bed and into an invalid's chair.

He had learned the name of his nurse. It was Virginia Hare, and she was the daughter of the doctor who was attending him. The doctor had told him that she was acting as a substitute, that others might be given needed vacations.

The days of the new life were not long in passing. Autumn, with its golden paintings and its myriad of colors, breathed sunshine into his heart. It spoke of something different, and he was glad. He still called his nurse Miss Hare; she called him Mr. Monaghan. He had become acquainted with the fact that she had known Kirby. She always spoke well of the pitcher whose place he had taken, and who, in turn, had filled the vacancy he had left. He wondered what manner of man Kirby was. And he was jealous of him. The last day of his confinement in the hospital he told Virginia of his hopes and his plans. He recalled his disappointments, his life, his years in the big leagues. She had been interested. He was grateful because she did not mention the incident that had brought her into his life. Often had he told himself that this was the girl

he wanted to marry—the girl he would marry.

Leaving, he asked if he might call.

She answered him: "Yes."

The old purpose revived within Monaghan. He would return to the big leagues. He would fight his way back and, getting there, would make Higgins regret the day he had been sent out.

Monaghan was physically weak from the effects of his injuries. The baseball season was over. Montgomery had lost out in its conflict. The Hilltops had won a flag, and were now fighting for the highest honors in baseball. Monaghan, in his wanderings, came upon a crowd in front of a bulletin board. He paused to watch the returns. Kirby was pitching for Higgins, and, as he gazed, a boy scurried over a scaffolding above the heads of the throng and posted three runs for the Hilltops.

Kirby was beating the Redlegs, winners of the pennant in the other league. The mob, because of Kirby, was watching the board with turbulent interest. It did not recognize in its background the man who had come to it in exchange for its favorite, and the man it blamed more than any other for the loss of the Southern League pennant.

Monaghan had come to it and had not made good; Kirby had gone away and had won a place in the majors.

In the hospital, Monaghan had not watched the course of baseball. There had been a bitterness against his past life, but now that he was out again, in the air and under God's sun, the call came crashing back. It was a call that was heeded. He wanted to carry out his purpose. He wanted to start over again—to try his arm. He longed for the ceaseless roar of the multitude. He worked his arm, swung it around, and, to his surprise, found that the strange stiffness that had beset him for months had disappeared. He swung again, and nearly knocked the hats of his neighbors from their heads. The pain had left—had gone like the penny of yesteryear. Freedom was in its place. He whooped in his joy, and a baseball crowd paid no heed; it was yelling for Kirby.

Caution, however, held Monaghan. He knew his own strength and, like all ball players, feared to encroach upon it.

But for the first time in months he was confident of himself.

Monaghan recovered rapidly, and it was not long before there was nothing to warn him that his life had nearly paid the penalty for a single infraction of nature's rules on one September night.

Then came the time when Monaghan felt capable. He was strong, and he induced his boarding mistress' boy to stand off at pitcher's distance and, with the protection of a catcher's pad, take the pitches he served. Jerry did not attempt putting any strength behind his work or any speed in his delivery, but he was supreme in his happiness with the knowledge that his arm, once weak, was strong again.

That night he called upon Virginia. His visits to her home had been rather frequent, and this night her father was with them. Doctor Hare had taken a liking to this big, unassuming, earnest pitcher, and Jerry was now a welcome visitor. To the doctor he told of his find of the day. The arm was examined, and the man of medicine declared he could find nothing out of place. He agreed with the possibility that the contact with the street car dislodged the misplacements that had previously existed.

The news thrilled the player. That night, after the physician had left, Jerry Monaghan whispered words that had been in his heart for weeks. Virginia had run away and had not answered him.

October passed. The Hilltops were champions of the world in baseball. Kirby was back in Montgomery. He met Monaghan on the street, introduced himself, and sneered at the older pitcher. Seeking personal conflict, he accused Monaghan of quitting and of double-dealing. Failing here, he started the bringing of Virginia's name into the remarks. The men were evenly matched in size, but Monaghan held the edge in strength. He spun Kirby around and slapped him across the face. Friends interfered, and Kirby, wiping his bruised lips, vowed he would get revenge.

News of the altercation traveled fast, and that night when Monaghan called Virginia was absent. Kirby, directly after the affair of the street, had gone to Virginia and had told her that Monaghan had ordered him to refrain from calling. He said a little trouble had resulted and friends had interfered.

Virginia, high-spirited girl that she was, dismissed both suitors.

Monaghan wrote a note in explanation, but it was returned to him, unopened. Even Doctor Hare was unable to secure him the meeting he sought.

Kirby was satisfied, and he told the story.

November, with its rains, came, and was dropped back into the whirl of time. December and January, with their holidays, had gone. Monaghan, when the weather permitted, worked out of doors, and he gradually conditioned himself. His boy catcher had become accustomed to the shock of speed, and Monaghan no longer favored the elbow that had been hurt.

He had seen Virginia but seldom, and now she was visiting friends in the North.

Kirby had long since left.

In his idle moments Jerry turned to billiards. Doctor Hare was a follower of the game, and with him Monaghan passed many an hour. This day, while awaiting his friend's arrival, he stood idly spinning an ivory ball over the green-covered table. He watched its peculiar speed and its erratic course. He applied the twist or, as it is known in the parlance of the sport, the "English," as he had applied it hundreds of times before. Idly enough he watched the ball go from his hand, and he noted that when given a back twist it would drop slowly to the cushions and would just move away.

He stood thus for many minutes. His eyes watched—suddenly the thought came:

If a billiard ball will do this—why not a baseball?

The thought was a vague one at first. But it grew until it obsessed him. The more he wondered the more he became convinced that the thing could be done. It would be the exposition of a slow ball the like of which had never been seen.

Nothing like this had ever been heard of in baseball.

Feverishly he worked. He caught the ball, twisted it, spun it away, and watched its every movement with eyes that were strained in the intensity of their state. One minute, two minutes, five minutes, ten minutes passed. Monaghan was oblivious to surroundings. He had concentrated all his mental faculties on this one thing, and he found that he could twist the ball with all the force of his fingers, but he could not make it travel from him at any degree of speed other than the minimum.

He spun the ball over his fingers, under them, and he found that he could make it take a sharp curve to the right when twisted over the fingers; he learned it would break toward the left when spun over his thumb.

Monaghan forgot his engagement. He forgot Doctor Hare—forgot everything but his great discovery.

He rushed from the billiard room,

made his way, with nervous steps, to his boarding house, and, not finding his boy catcher, went into the yard back of the dwelling and, with a barn as a mark for turning back the ball, he started. For a long time he puzzled over the twist of his fingers and their grip on the leather. He could not make this baseball leave his hand as did the ivory.

But he was determined. There must be a way. To find out was his single desire.

That night, after darkness had settled, and he could no longer throw, he pondered over the problem. The next day and the next and the next he worked. His boy catcher tired of laboring with a puzzle that did not contain more than a passing interest, for it was one he could not understand, and oftentimes Monaghan's experiments were conducted under conditions that were quite as unfavorable as those he had labored under when first trying the throw.

One day the solution came. It came fully as suddenly as had the problem.

For weeks Jerry had been practicing. He had not been able to overcome the shift of his fingers against the cover of the ball, and while he had succeeded in making it spin backward and lose its speed in its flight, he could never make it go quite where he was directing it. His fingers, catching on the roughened surface, never failed to steer the ball away from its course. The solution came as he was shaving one morning. He had practically completed the task and was rubbing talcum powder into his smarting skin. As he rubbed, his fingers were softened and made velvety. Jerry, rubbing them, noted their strange and pleasing smoothness.

Like a flash it came; this, then, was the answer.

Not long afterward he was throwing the baseball from his hand; he was spinning it backward, and he was controlling its course.

He was throwing it with a motion that was almost identical to the move he carried when shifting his curves and slipping through his fast one. His slow delivery was a thing of beauty. The ball, instead of spinning like a meteor to the catcher, dropped away from Monaghan's hand and moved sluggishly, but all the more disconcertingly, toward the plate.

When varied with fast pitches and quick-breaking curves such as Monaghan possessed it was positively a menace.

March winds were blowing when Monaghan reported to Manager Finn. Monaghan was in condition; and Finn, wise to the ways of ball players, recognized ability and confidence. Silently he praised himself for his keenness of intellect. Five major-league clubs visited Montgomery that spring; five major-league clubs went away defeated. None secured a run off Monaghan in the five innings of each game he pitched. Monaghan had left each game after a lead had been secured, and each game had increased his effectiveness and had acted as a tonic to his good right arm.

A few times in each game he had experimented with the slow ball. He had smiled when sluggers whose names were known wherever baseball was played struck wildly and without effect at the elusive sphere.

A day before the opening of the Southern League season Jerry met Virginia, face to face, on the street. The girl tried to evade him, but he planted himself directly in her path. He had heard from her father's lips the reason for her attitude; and now, in words that stumbled over each other as they crowded from his mouth, he told the real reason for what he considered the inconsequential affair with Kirby.

Without asking her permission, he turned, and she did not protest when he accompanied her to her home.

That night Monaghan was the happiest man in the whole world.

Virginia Hare had consented—but this is a story of baseball.

He pitched and he won the opening game for Montgomery. He won it with ease. New Orleans, the team that had driven him from the game in the dying days of the previous baseball year, made only three hits off his delivery. Starr, Hendryx, and Northern were novices before him. One inning he struck out the three of them almost as fast as they stepped to the plate. In all he struck out—Montgomery still tells of this with bated breath—seventeen of the visitors. In every one of the nine innings he toyed with his opponents.

Monaghan was not meant for the Southern League. Before April had hardly passed the Lambs, the band of players who had ridden him from the majors, purchased his release. The owners of the Lambs had taken advantage of the row between Managers Higgins and Finn and had taken over the contract with Montgomery after it had been canceled with the Hilltops.

Monaghan was satisfied. His new place would give him the opportunity he craved. He would make the best of it.

The Hilltops, because of their work in the previous season, were favorites in the race for the flag. The Lambs were outsiders. It was a race that narrowed down to the two teams. The Lambs won out.

When the final averages were made up it was found that the Hilltops had lost out by seven games—seven games in one hundred and fifty-four.

That season the Hilltops and Lambs had met in twenty-two contests. Of the twenty-two, Monaghan had pitched—seven.

He had won them all—with the aid of the "English" curve.

In five of the seven games he was pitted against Kirby.

A BAD DAY FOR HUNTING

TOM and Dick were excellent boys, well versed in Bible lore, and constant attendants at Sunday school. In fact, they knew all about the pictures that are made of the many characters in the Bible. Their wisdom went all the way from the creation of Adam and Eve to the winged appearance of the seraphim and cherubim.

One day they took possession of their father's double-barreled shotgun and went hunting. The game was scarce and their aim was poor, the result being that they put in more than half of the day without anything to show for their labor.

Finally, they saw a big bird on the bough of a tree near by. Tom put the gun on Dick's shoulder, and, taking aim from this more or less tremulous rest, let go at the bird. The bird fell to the ground—which was their first surprise. The gun kicked Tom over—which was the second surprise.

Dick, however, greatly elated by the success of the shot, ran forward to retrieve the game. When he came near to what they had shot, he found a big owl, with immense wings and a very short tail.

He rushed back to Tom, and, pale from fright, and trembling in every limb, he said in an awed whisper:

"Tom, we've shot a seraphim!"

The Kind That Gets There

By Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "Revolt," "Shoulder Straps," Etc.

Winning a corporal's billet. A drama staged on the rifle range—and if you know of any sport that strikes men to a more profound silence than rifle firing Sergeant Gallagher would like to hear of it

WHY is it, now? inquired my friend, Sergeant Gallagher. Anchor such men to the Dewey dry dock and they'd swim away wid it, such is their lack o' understandin'; and as for discipline, if the devil himself were major general they'd be askin' him the number o' buttons on his full-dress coat. Soldiers they're not and would never make; and 'tis bobtails they should have, but look what they get! Inside or outside, 'tis the same; and Hardy Harris is but a case in point.

It was in Peking he came to us, and him so raw a gumboot his name was not yet dry on the muster roll, and wid the youth o' him so shinin' on his face that the recruitin' officer must've winked the other eye when he took down his years. A cracklin' laugh and a hearty voice and smilin' eyes he had, and the conceit of a sergeant major in his private marine's uniform.

From the start he was an eyesore to the content o' the squad room, so active-minded was he. "Rise an' shine!" he'd yell wid the first note o' reveille, and wid that he'd be standin' upright on his bunk, crowin' like a rooster, or maybe playin' football wid a tin pan down the middle o' the room. And all day he would not contain himself, singin' when he did nothin' else—and we fifteen old-timers, all havin' a leanin' toward bunk fatigue, as a soldier should, helpless to pipe him down.

If a man cares to be on his feet from mornin' till taps why should he be in the service? And for less than he did besides I've seen many a bright youngster turned into Exhibit A on visitor's day in the corridor of a home for unruly soldiers. For if there was a thing he could not do, that thing he would do; and a military regulation was the same to him as a civil law to an anarchist—'twas made to be broken.

I mind his first offense. It was on a morning, and drill call had gone. Hardy had fallen in number four o' the front rank, which was characteristic o' the lad, for number four would lead the squad in extended order, McCumber, seein' he was but a rookie, and havin' a mind for the nicety o' the drill and maybe for his own advancement, wedged in from behind and shoved Hardy gentlelike to number one. And then of a sudden the place where they'd been standin' turned into a whirl o' arms and legs, wid the contiguous men scatterin' in a circle like foam around an eddy.

"Attention!" I yelled, for I was forming the company; but divil a bit of attention did they give me. Then I rushed in wid my own fists to settle them. When they saw who it was, and maybe felt the weight o' me, they give in, but Hardy wid a quick step sideways toward the position under dispute.

"What is the matter wid you?" I asked, and both of 'em started to tell

me at once, so I could make nothing of it.

"'Twas fightin' in ranks you were, anyway," I said, "and you can tell it to the colonel as well," and wid that I shoved 'em both into the rear rank, where neither belonged, and went ahead wid the formation.

Now 'tis then a man's true inwardness comes out, when he stands on the carpet wid the grip o' the service he's been playin' wid closin' in on him like a hand. The charge is no matter; 'tis the feel o' the thing. Good soldiers I've seen who'd charge a Colt's battery wid a laugh turn white and trembly over a less offense than Hardy's—and 'twas his first time up, mind you. But wid the born impudence of him, he was cooler than myself; and he talked wid the colonel man to man in a way that told beyond mistakin' that his days as a private would be short and troublesome.

"You must be disciplined," said the colonel. "Private McCumber's the older soldier o' the two."

"But not the better one, sir," said Hardy.

"And he's also the bigger man."

"Wid the same qualification, sir," said Hardy, who still had fight in his eyes.

"You're a recruit, and you will live and learn," says the colonel. "Bein' an older soldier, he took precedence over you in the way o' squad leadership. Bein' taller than you, he would naturally fall in on your left. Both o' you are to blame, for if you had no right to resist him, he had no right to use force. I will let you off wid ten hours' police duty each."

Hardy left the office wid no grudge against the colonel, and well he might, for he'd got off easy, as I told him. But the precedence stuff was all rot, he said; and he could take charge of a squad as well as any one, and of a company, too. And as for the punishment, he'd be glad to do it for the sake o' the exercise, and to see McCumber do it; for he could do more police work standin' on his head than McCumber on his feet, and easier.

'Twas well he felt so, for that was only the beginnin'. Absent over leave it was next time. For various reasons that I will not enter into, the colonel had given noncommissioned officers all-night liberty, wid privates due in at twelve o'clock. 'Twas rank discrimination, Hardy said the minute he heard of it. There were others that agreed wid him, but he was the only one to back his words. Next mornin' at reveille he came marchin' in, wid a grin on the face o' him, and his head held high. Two weeks' restriction he got this time, for the colonel believed in cumulative punishment, like.

And so it went. There's not an offense in the blue book classified under the head o' insubordination that Hardy Harris did not commit, once or repeated. If a week went by and his name not on the report sheet the C. O.'s clerk would check up his availables, satisfied he must be deserted and not missed, or mislaid in the sick bay. Fightin', insolence, over the wall, noise after taps, noise before reveille—and each time he would come into the office wid a grin and leave it wid a smile, as if 'twas a game the colonel and he were playin' between 'em.

There was more than me that could not understand why the colonel should endure it, for Hardy was due for his summary court-martial and kick long before. There was Stinson for one, and he as duty struck a corporal as ever worked ten years for his stripes, and a-lovin' Hardy as little as you would imagine in consequence, for besides the discrepancies in their dispositions Stinson felt the burden o' responsibility, bein' at the time in charge o' the squad room.

"The unlicked cub!" Stinson growls

to me once when he felt the need of unburdenin' himself. "One o' these days I'll break him, for no rookie can put on airs over me," which last was on account o' the impudence in Hardy's eyes, which knew no difference when it came to respect between a corporal and a Chinese coolie.

There were black looks between 'em, and bad blood, and little more, till the day after Hardy's first pay day. Not bein' a drinkin' man, he came home wid parcels hangin' to him like a Dutch housewife. When he began to unwrap 'em on his bunk the room gathered around, for there were rusty Chinese swords and misused opium pipes and picture postal cards and flags of all nations and a dragon pennant and an E Pluribus Unum banner, and more. He fished a bottle o' mucilage out o' his ditty box, and started to eye up the wall behind his bunk like he was an artist. Just then Stinson shoved up to him.

"What's this rubbish?" he asked in a voice you could cut, 'twas that congealed.

"Have you no eye for beauty, corporal?" says Hardy, cockin' his head a bit more to one side.

"Turn around when I speak to you. What is it you think yourself, the colonel or something?"

"A private I know myself, worse luck for the service," says Hardy; "but if ever I see the day I have more hash marks than chevrons I'll change to dungarees for my uniform."

"You'd have stripes all over your body if you had your deserts," snarled Stinson, for his slowness o' promotion was a slow point wid him.

"I'm not wearin' 'em yet," says Hardy, and starts to fasten a picture to the wall.

"Take that down!" says Stinson.

"Why should I?"

"Because I say so." And Stinson reached out and tore the picture down himself and threw it on the floor.

Stinson was within his rights, for he'd first given the order, but could Hardy see it? One step forward he took, growlin' out something about a slave driver; and his fist started up. He'd 'a' swung on him, corporal's stripes and all—and Hardy not yet full grown and Stinson wid a punch like a hammer—but I shoved in between 'em. "None o' that," I said. "Harris, you're up to office hours for insolence. And you cannot hang those things up for the dust they collect."

Six weeks had Hardy been in Peking, and it was his eighth offense. "If all men were like you," said the colonel, "we'd be hirin' civilians to do guard duty. What have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing, sir," said Hardy.

"Well, you should learn in time. Five days' bread and water. Take him away, corporal!" And to me: "Sergeant Gallagher, I would see you alone."

A funny man was the colonel, always wid a way o' sizin' you up like you were a machine out o' gear and him an expert mechanic. So he'd looked at Hardy, and so he looked at me. And he says:

"This is gettin' to be a habit wid you and Harris."

"It is so, sir," I said.

"Can you not find another way o' handlin' him? Not that you must not report him, and if you do 'twill not go against you; but a man that's fit for the first sergeant's diamond should be able to do without. There's good stuff in the lad if you can find it. But you should know him better than I. You've five days to think it over. You may go."

A plain enough hint it was, for I'd had my mind on my first sergeant's diamond for a year past, and well he knew it. Five days I thought wid no progress, for when a man takes the

bit in his teeth there's no reasonin' wid him; and if fear would dissuade Hardy he'd 'a' been dissuaded long before. The first thing he did when he came out was to kick up a shindy wid a big bully who'd cut down Hardy's floor space by movin' his bunk over. But I managed to settle the dispute unofficial; and that night I went on liberty wid Hardy wid a mind to do what I could.

"You're a fool!" I said, by way o' introduction.

"I know it," said he.

"Buck a bit more and you'll be broken like a match and cast out, for the colonel's out o' patience wid you, and you amount to no more in the service than a fly on a wheel."

"Can I not see it?" he asks.

"And 'tis for that very reason the service is what it is, as you know. If it allowed every man his will 'twould fall apart like a house o' cards. Can you not forget yourself, then?"

"I cannot," he said, and I saw he could not.

"Why, then, did you enlist?" I asked, out o' patience.

"I think you mean well by me, Sergeant Gallagher, and I will tell you," he answers. "I enlisted because I was a better man than what I was. That you may understand me I will say that ever since I cried papers on the streets, which was not so long ago, I have had my own will and my own way, and I have done some other man's. I thought the service might be better, but it's the same. So I buck, as you say; and I can do no different, for it's in me."

"You have a fine opinion of yourself," says I. "Is it that you think yourself too good for a private?"

"I am better than many a man that wears shoulder straps," he replies, wid his boy's chin in the air.

"Is there nothing you would like to do to prove it," I inquires, "before you are kicked out as undesirable, wid your ornaments torn from your uniform?"

"Before I kick myself out, there is but one thing I would like to do, and I will, which is to put Corporal Stinson in the sick bay wid these hands o' mine."

"He could make a meal o' you," I says, laughin', "and would be glad o' the chance. And if you lay a hand on him you will be kicked out indeed; but you will see barred sunlight first. Can you not see that is why he is tryin' to get you to do it?"

"Is that so?" he says, and thinks. "It is so," he says, and thinks some more. "For that I will wallop him if I swing for it, but is there no way a man can settle his private differences privately in this outfit?"

"Privates wid privates, and corporals wid corporals," I said, wid a sideways look at him.

"If I make myself corporal, then could I fight him fair?"

"If you do it within a year, for by then his foreign service will be up."

"Well, then, I will," he said. "'Tis not a year I'll waste on it, though, for a corporal's billet is but a poor one, and I see nothing in the service for me, anyway. But that one thing I will do before I leave."

"Good luck be to you," I told him, "and may your head swell till it busts wid the bigness of it," I thought, and wid that I left him, grinnin' to myself.

Did I not intimate he had no sense? Sure he meant it; and from that day he was the joke o' the squad room, so frank was he wid his intentions. And him a four-month recruit, wid a record as black as could be painted, and men in the same squad room wid two hash marks still waiting their first promotion.

When he was not cleanin' his accouterments or burnishin' his bright work or pressin' his clothes, he was busy wid the drill manual and soldier's hand-

book. Within two weeks there was no evolution he could not explain, nor each man's part in it; and so far from qualifyin' himself for corporal, if paper work had been all he could've substituted in drill for the commandin' officer. The way he fell into routine made the most duty-struck stripe chaser in barracks look undisciplined beside him; and his drill was a picture to see, if one could forget the conceitedness behind it. Such a change there was from the harum-scarum regulation buster o' the past!

But it got him nothing, as he should've known. Well drilled a man must be to win promotion, and obedient and all; but it must be unconsciouslike and without apparent ulterior aim, as my friend O'Hara said when a Swede whipped him unexpected. So never a second glance did the colonel give Hardy as he passed him in ranks, nor any of the other officers; and the air o' the squad room was full o' jeerin' at him from mornin' to night.

"Why should I not want to be corporal?" Hardy would ask. "Is it a crime to want more money per? You that do not care for it will do me the favor o' passin' me your pay envelope when next the eagle disgorges, and I'll believe you." His real reason for wantin' promotion o' course he could not tell them.

Stinson was the worst o' his tormentors. Aside from their old difference, the idea of a recruit wantin' to be made corporal near drove Stinson wild, it havin' taken him so long to win his own stripes. "Mitt glomer!" he'd call Hardy, and "Fluffy Ruffles!" wid enough of a smile that he could pass it off as a joke; and Hardy must take it. But there was a mighty unpromisin' glint came to his eyes whenever he looked at Stinson.

Then the spring trainin' season came on, and officers and men were busy wid wonderin' whether we'd beat the English at the international sports, or be beat by them. And, Hardy bein' what he was, he says to me one day:

"Can any one go in for athletics, or must you serve till your back's crippled and your brain's musty to get a chance at that, too?"

"The only qualification is that you be a man," I tells him. "Will you try for the team?"

"I will," says he.

"What's your stunt?"

"Whatever I can win in."

"Sure you'll win?"

"Sure I'll win," he answers; and that day he starts to work, wid what idea in mind I know not.

Never did a man train as he trained —and him too heavy for the long runs and too short for the middle distances and too slow for the sprints and too light in the arms for the pole vault, and too something or other to do more than second best in anything. And he got lean and hard as iron, and fresh-skinned and clear-eyed—so Stinson would've had no walkaway if they'd mixed then—but that was all. Never a show did he stand in anything; but he would not give up till the detail for the American team was posted, and then he would not give up. Instead, he went into trainin' afresh for the cross-country run, which was to take place a month later, and in that, by virtue o' the fact that there were four men in the team, he won a place.

And you should've seen the race! No, he did not win it; did I not say he was but fourth man in the test? But he was second American to breast the tape, for he finished wid a crazy sprint that carried him past four men —and that after a four-mile run—and he dropped wid a black face at the feet o' the timekeeper. And the colonel himself helped pick him up, and twisted his mustache wid a thoughtful air as they carried Hardy off.

"Did I not tell you?" I heard him

say to the adjutant. "Clear grit! If only——" And they went away talkin'.

That sprint o' his had won the race for the Americans, which gave us the balance o' points for the year; and for a while the men stopped laughin' at him. But on a mornin' a week after the race I found him studyin' something on the bulletin board, and I stopped beside him.

'Twas the regular notice o' the beginnin' o' target practice, and a letter from the major general posted beneath it. Wid the official language boiled out o' it, the letter said that the best rifle shot in Peking would be selected to make one of a team to represent the marine corps at Sea Girt next fall. I saw Hardy's face light up as he read it.

"What's the idea, sergeant?" he asked.

"Is it possible there is something yet I can tell you?" I said. "Each branch o' the service sends its best, and after better trainin' and such the best o' the lot o' them are sent to the world championship match at Bisley, which is in England."

"Thank you. Is there a recruit's handicap on *that?*"

"There is not," I answered. "You'll try for it, I suppose," and sure I meant it but as a joke.

"I'm thinkin' shootin' is my line," he said. "I'll not *try* for this; but I'll *make* it."

"You will, will you!" And I went on, for I had not the words to answer his foolishness. He, a rookie, wid never a military rifle in his hand yet—and there were six expert riflemen in the command, includin' myself, to say nothing o' the sharpshooters! Violent modest he'd been before compared to this!

That night he came to me to borrow my firin' regulations; and I loaned it to him wid a grin. He sat up till taps studyin' it, figurin' out trajectories and wind velocities and mirages before he'd ever seen a range. Or maybe 'twas the notes on physical condition he studied, for he quit smokin' the next day, and started in again on his trainin', and took advantage o' no more week-end liberties till the end.

Frank he was wid his purposes as ever, and 'twas not long before the whole squad room knew o' his latest. Before they'd presented him wid corporal's chevrons cut out o' sackcloth, and now they gave him a leather sharpshooter's medal, and twitted him unmerciful, as he deserved. But were they buzzin' flies they could not have disturbed him less. True, the chaffin' of him was mostly good-natured, for in spite of all he was not an ill-liked man.

Only by Stinson; and I mind how Stinson's eyebrows drew together when he heard of it. Stinson was o' the old army, you must know; and to him a man was hardly yet a soldier till he'd served his first four years. Besides, he himself had tried for the Seagirt team three times, and would try again this year; and by past record had the best chance of any in the garrison to make it. And he came over to Hardy's bunk, and stood looking down upon him, wid Hardy deep in study; and he spat out, "*Ye rookie!*" like Hardy was beneath further notice. And Hardy looked up and grinned at him, but wid eyes so steady that Stinson's own dropped after a bit, and he turned away.

Then target season began; and first time over the range Hardy should have learned his place. For there's bad shots and good shots and born sharpshooters; and Hardy was again in the second division. He had not the shootin' eye, and no amount o' trainin' would give it to him, as I would have told him had I cared to waste my breath, for I hate to see a man work so for certain disappointment.

Besides the studyin' of heat waves and atmospheric pressure and the like,

and the care he was takin' of himself, he was doin' things I'd never before seen done on a rifle range. Never did he make a shot but he'd note down the light on the firin' point and the light at the target and the light between, and the wind velocity and its direction, and the range and elevation used, and the exact hit on the target, and the rifle hold and trigger pull and all. And at night he'd pore over the work o' the day, wid a green shade on his forehead for fear o' eye strain.

Had he been blind as a mole he would've improved wid all that. At practice he fell down; at preliminary he did better; and at record he made marksman and only a dozen points to spare. But the sharpshooter's course was to come, and the expert's test, and he must make both of 'em before he could even figure in the competition.

"Is your mind still fixed on Seagirt?" I asked him. "You've made but an indifferent start, wid thirty men ahead o' you."

"'Tis not startin' I'm good at, but finishin'," he says, and I thinks o' the five-mile run.

"You've nerve," I admitted, "and for that I like you, though it goes against the grain. But 'tis more than nerve it takes to guide a bullet."

"Was there ever a man wid nerve, sergeant, that had not something more behind it?" he asked.

My stripes against a month's pay I'd 'a' bet that he'd not get past the sharpshooter's course. But it was the same story—practice poor, preliminary better, record best—and his work wid the pencil became not so much of a squad-room joke. Only twenty men had made sharpshooter; and but twelve of us led Hardy for record score.

"You're a broth of a boy for luck," I told him, wishful to take him down a peg.

"Is it so now?" he answered. "Have you studied my scores?" And he thrust a sheet o' paper at me.

And 'twas the evenest firin'! Never a perfect score, and the lowest forty-five, for he was showin' me only the ones he'd made on record. He'd find the bull's-eye and he'd lose it; but nothing could shake him from the four ring. The eye of a born shot he'd not, but steadiness and endurance and judgment he had instead; and I says as I hands back the paper:

"I was but jokin'. You'll deserve all you get."

"If I can but get all I deserve I'll be satisfied," and he grins like he expected to.

He would get five dollars a month extra pay, anyway, for he made expert. There were but five of us, wid Stinson leadin' the list, and a bit peeved because he was not the only man on it. And Hardy was the tailender; but he would not have cared had there been a hundred ahead o' him, so sure he was o' beatin' the lot. "I'll send you all picture postal cards from Sea Girt," he promises the rest o' the men; and he had them seein' them cards—the way he had wid him.

Stinson would not speak to him, except in line o' duty; and then 'twould 'a' been better had he not spoken. Never had Hardy drilled to suit him, nor kept his bunk in shape, nor anything; and after he knew Hardy was to fire against him in the match he went after him worse than ever. But little did Hardy seem to mind now. He'd but smile to himself, as though he had a joke he wasn't sharin'.

Had I not known Stinson so well I should've been afraid o' foul play, for there's many a way o' cheatin' in rifle firin'. The littlest split in a cartridge, or a front sight bent a hundredth of an inch, or a scracth on the rifling will throw a man clear off the target on the long ranges. But Stinson was a soldier for all his faults; he would not

do that. Satisfied in his heart I think he was that the best man should win. It was the possibility o' that best man bein' a recruit that offended his sense o' decency.

When the day o' the match came it was like a holiday, for the colonel suspended all drills, and gave men not on guard their liberty. They escorted us the three miles to the range, skylarkin' all the way and callin' out bets one to the other, keepin' the nerves of us that were to shoot strung up like fiddle strings. All except Hardy, for he was that composed you could not 'a' disturbed him wid a battery.

"You've come far," I said to him as we passed through the gate o' the range. "But, man to man," I asked him, "do you expect to go farther? I would like to get to the bottomness o' your conceit."

"I will answer your question wid another," he says. "Is it not because I expected to shoot this day that I'm shootin'? If it is conceit, it has served me; would I not be a fool to give it the go-by now? I will win this match."

"You will win hell!" mutters Stinson to himself, and Hardy grinned again.

The range had been made ready for us, and we marched direct to the two-hundred-yard firing point. The four ranges o' the marksman's course, slow fire, was to be the test. There were but four targets, and we must double up on one. It was a small matter; but the range officer bein' a man of impartiality, we drew straws for it. So it came that when we were ready to fire Stinson and Hardy stood side by side, Hardy firin' wid the rest of us, and Stinson after him.

"Commence firin'!" said the colonel, and we were off.

Almost at once the four of us on the left shot. The targets bobbed down, and up again; and there were three fours, wid me findin' the bull's-eye by a bit o' luck. Then Stinson shot. Bein' on the next target, I saw how his temper hadn't unsettled his nerves, for his rifle hold was like a vise. "A center bull!" he said before the shot was marked up—he had that fine an eye! He was so sure of it that he didn't even look at the target when the white disk came up.

'Twas a grand day for shootin', wid not a cloud, and little heat, and but a four-mile wind blowin' straight across the range. Next shot Hardy got a five, and Stinson another, while I went into the four ring by but a finger's breadth. At the end o' the first string Stinson had a perfect score, wid Hardy one behind, and the rest of us followin' close as might be. And by now there was not a sound to be heard on the range but the crack of our rifles and the callin' o' the scores, for there's no other sport strikes men to dumbness as does rifle firin'.

I looked at Hardy, and I grinned to myself wid the policy o' the lad. Between each shot he was standin' wid droopin' shoulders and eyes on the green grass in front o' him, and not a nerve or muscle workin' more than might be to keep him on his feet—for so he would make his head save his strength. And Stinson looked at him and laughed, thinkin' it was discouragement that made him stand so.

The second string was consecutive bull's-eyes for both, Stinson runnin' up a possible score, the first I'd ever seen made at two hundred yards. Hardy was but one point behind—the twitch of a finger would change their positions. I mind Stinson's face growing blacker and blacker toward the end, for each time Hardy fired Stinson would pray for a swabo, and each time a five would ring up. The slowness o' Hardy's movements, like a man dead beat wid weariness, no longer fooled him.

Such anger would've ruined my shootin'; but he was not an easy man

to disturb, was Stinson. At three hundred yards we knelt to fire, and his rifle was a part o' him, and he a part o' the earth, for the steadiness of it. He left the black center o' the target but once, wid Hardy losin' it for two shots runnin'. It looked like the match lay between the two of 'em, for I was third best and five points behind Hardy. "Are you so sure now?" I heard Stinson ask Hardy on the way to the five-hundred-yard firing point; but Hardy did not let on to hear him.

Twenty rounds we'd fired each by now; and no man can do that in a match without feelin' the strain of it. Nerves and eyesight have their limits; and, speakin' for myself, the bull's-eye was lookin' small and far away and wabbly. But I managed to find it a decent number o' times; and as for Hardy and Stinson, so close were the hits bunched on their target you could've covered 'em all wid your hand. Hardy's fours were but warts on the bull; but he got three of 'em, and Stinson again but one.

"You're a good shot, and you'll make a better," said the colonel to Hardy on the way to the last range. "But you'll not win this match, I think."

"I will win it, sir," said Hardy between his teeth.

Six hundred yards is a tryin' range when you're fresh; and we were not fresh. Also you get sightin' shots to help you in the regular course, but not in competition. That gave Hardy a bit of edge, his head bein' full o' elevation and windage statistics, and the first shot he knocked out a four. Stinson got but a three; but their second shots both found the center. Then it was five straight for both o' them for the rest o' the string.

Stinson was restin' longer now between shots; twice he took the time limit. And when he did fire, instead o' holdin' long on the bull, as he'd done before, and makin' sure o' light and wind before he squeezed the trigger, he took snapshots. He was trustin' to the natural quickness of his eye altogether now. But Hardy was holdin' longer than ever, knowin' by now, I guess, that his steadiness would last.

Stinson's sixth and seventh shots were on opposite sides o' the edge o' the bull's-eyes; his eighth was a four. His ninth was a three; and Hardy again but one point behind him.

By now dead silence had come over the range, except for the poppin' of our rifles. Stinson's face had gone red and then white; whether his anger was at himself for weakenin', or at Hardy for the chance he still had to beat him out, I know not. The three of us on the left fired quick to get it over, for we wanted to see the finish o' the duel between them two. We turned to watch Hardy; every man on the field watched him except Stinson, and him flat on his face to rest himself. And not a man but wid the same thought as myself: given five shots more Hardy would win the match. But now——

He took a long time. Spraddled out as he was almost lengthwise o' the firin' line, legs spread wide, elbows half buried in the earth, left arm strainin' in the sling, butt against shoulder, finger on trigger, he steadied the rifle into aim twice, and lowered it twice. So tense was he that one sharp word from Stinson would've set him off either time, and lost him the shot. I wondered did Stinson think o' that; and while I wondered Hardy fired. He rolled over on his side, wid a long breath; and waited for the marker. Square over the face o' the bull's-eye was the white disk when the target came out o' the butts. "Harris, a five!" droned the scorer.

Stinson got to his knees, and the face of him was like a gray rock. He dropped prone, and from head to heels there was not a lost motion nor the quiver of a muscle. He'd got himself

together. His rifle came up slowly, stopped, steadied.

Hardy was lookin' at Stinson; I was lookin' at him, too, past Hardy's face. I saw Hardy start and stare at Stinson's rifle. His mouth opened, closed again. I followed his eyes, but could see nothing.

'Twas the days o' the old Springfield, you mind. No one was close enough to see it but Hardy. If he'd but kept still—— Stinson's hand was already squeezin' in on the trigger. It was not that Hardy was not tempted, for I saw his jaw set hard before he spoke, easylike and pleasant:

" 'Tis a high-powered gun you have there, Stinson. Or is it you are tryin' for a ricochet hit?"

Stinson glared at him, mad wid the thought that Hardy was tryin' to rattle him; and the colonel and range officer stepped forward wid the same idea. But Hardy pointed at Stinson's rear sight; and it had fallen from the jar o' the previous shot from six hundred yards nearly to five hundred. Into the bank the bullet would've gone, wid no hope for anything but a red flag, and Hardy the winner o' the match—but the colonel was speakin'.

"Correct your elevation and take your shot, Stinson." And then, to himself or the range officer, I don't know which: "By the Lord! *That's* real stuff."

Stinson gave Hardy one funny, bewildered, shamed look; and then he collected himself and fixed his sight and fired the shot that sent him to Seagirt. And says the colonel a minute later:

"I'm glad you won it; not that I want to lose you, but I've great need just now of a vacancy in my quota o' corporals."

Did he mean Hardy? Did he? Before a week Hardy was actin' jack; and within a month he had his stripes. And says I—for Stinson was not yet gone:

"Give me a tip when you're to start your campaign for a yellow ticket by beatin' Stinson up, won't you? 'Twill be a fracas I'd hate to miss."

"I've been thinkin' o' that same," he answers. "But, you know, Stinson's not such a bad sort."

And would you see him to-day? Look out on the parade ground and pick the troop that's cleanest o' uniform and straightest in rank and niftiest o' drill and—— You have it already! Then you see the man marchin' in front of it, wid the step of a West Pointer and the sword like a sunbeam and the command of an officer born. That's him. Lieutenant he is, and a trouble-maker and disturber o' the peace still, forever wid a brag that his troop is the best in the command, and drillin' 'em night and day to make his word good, and makin' his men like it by interferin' wid the mess till the rations they get would grace the colonel's table. The meanin' o' subordination he does not know, nor his own limitations; and major general he'll be before he dies for his ignorance.

THE SURVIVOR'S DISCOVERY

A TRAVELER who thought himself the only survivor of a shipwreck was cast on an island in the South Pacific. Knowing it to be a cannibal island, he kept himself hidden for three days. Finally, driven out by hunger, he discovered some smoke rising from a small grove of trees, and carefully approached to see what type of savages they were.

Just as he got in earshot of the fire, he heard a voice say: "Why in hell did you play that card?"

He fell on his knees, and, devoutly raising his hands, cried: "Thank God, they are Christians!"

Beyond the Threshold

By Joseph Ernest

Author of "The Man Who Made Gold," Etc.

The strange case of a scientist who in his desire to see into the future dragged his body through hours of life in a minute or two and didn't wait for Time to catch up. It is an interesting experiment: an attempt to overcome the three dimensions of length, breadth, and thickness and arrive at another—the famous Fourth Dimension, that psychological state of mind in which a person is able to grasp the fact that there is neither time nor space.

DISREGARDING personal prejudice in the matter, I will try to set down in his own words just what Gregson said about thought transference before he made the threat that caused all the trouble.

We had been using his study as the downtown end of our wireless-telephone experiments, Phillips and I; and while we packed up to depart Gregson sat at his wide, flat desk, before a pile of cardboard cubes. The cubes were colored as to their faces with different hues, on some definite but to me quite mysterious system. We had lost a lot of sleep over the telephone, and a chance remark on the part of Phillips produced an effect of mild irritation on Gregson's rather erratic temperament. He dropped playing with the cubes in order to stand up and orate.

You may conceive him as a tall and spectral person, with very black and abundant hair.

"You keep on saying that you know things," he complained. "You know there can be no action at a distance. I tell you that you *know* nothing. It's the bane of you physicists to pretend to absolute knowledge. You knew the atom couldn't be divided, till radium came along to make you look like a pack of fools. You knew that the transmutation of metals was a dream of the charlatan, until you saw it taking place under your very noses."

He waved an arm in disgust.

"I tell you that you don't know anything. Why does one end of a stick move when you touch the other? You don't even know that. Nobody knows. And after all these decades of the electric telegraph you still think you know that there can't be action at a distance."

"Oh, a current passing along a wire," protested Phillips. "That's a different thing. It's continuous."

"But when you investigate you find the current isn't in the wire at all. It's a handy working theory to pretend that the current is in the wire, but that is the one place in the whole world where it doesn't reside. Probably it is everywhere else but just in the wire. Isn't that so?"

We had to agree with him.

"And at that you don't know what it is. You see and hear, but you don't know what light and sound are. It isn't light and sound that reach the brain. Light stops at the retina of the eye,

and sound at three little bones in the ear. What is it that reaches the mind from a beautiful picture or a glorious symphony? Again you don't know."

"Nerve impulses," I ventured.

"Which are probably the same thing as electricity, but are certainly neither sound nor light. That wireless contraption you've been keeping me out of bed with lately——"

He waved an arm again toward the telephone apparatus, over which Phillips was bent lovingly.

"It works, anyway," responded Phillips genially. "You can't deny now that it works. We've got the jump on Vandersteyn and his bunch with our rotary arc." I should explain that Vandersteyn was our principal rival.

"I admit that," said Gregson. "The thing's clever—diabolically clever. But though you made every coil and diaphragm with your own hands, you don't know how it works. Isn't that action at a distance?"

"No; it's action along sustained Hertzian waves."

"Hertzian bunk! You give a thing a name, and imagine that you have explained it. Waves you can't see in a substance you can't touch. You tell me it's ether, and pretend that it's fifteen trillion times lighter than air. But you can't produce a bottle of it. You talk along the ether, of course. But how do you know that I can't think along it?"

We laughed, having no other retort ready. But it seemed good to Gregson to regard our amusement as a challenge.

"You won't think it quite so amusing if I get to work on you," he said darkly. "Go ahead and pack your old junk and take it home with you, when you get ready. But I'll maybe talk to you in your own laboratory without it, just the same. And without stirring out of this room."

"Oh, but that's absurd, old top!" said Phillips, busily disconnecting wires. "Or else why would I spend years of my young life inventing this thing?"

Gregson fell to piling his colored cubes into some sort of symmetrical arrangement. He smiled in a hopeless fashion.

"What's the use?" he said. "A couple of ossified minds like you physicists have! But some day I'll do it. Perhaps I'll do it a darned sight sooner than you expect."

Phillips dumped the last of his instruments into its appropriate case, strapped it, ready for departure, and stood up with a gasp of relief.

"Go ahead, Roper," he said, handing me one of the cases to carry. "We'll leave the superstitious old grouch to play with his box of bricks."

"If you made yourself a set of tesseracts," retorted Gregson, "you would stop talking about superstition. When you look at life through these everything is possible. Even foretelling the future."

We laughed at that, and departed with our wireless tackle, the experiments in which Gregson had assisted being successfully concluded. From the rosy pinnacle of his initial success Phillips was inclined to be sympathetic and commiserative on the subject of his friend.

"If it wasn't for this occult bug of his," he confided on the way to his apartment, "Gregson would have made a fortune on Wall Street by this time. He's one of the most daring and skillful operators on the market, they tell me. But he doesn't care enough for money, at least, not to go in for it baldheaded. He ought to get married, of course. It's not healthy, living all alone in that big house."

He sighed, and shook his head.

"You know, he sits for hours over those colored bricks, trying to get an idea of four-dimensional space. Thinks he could project his mind into it and see the future all laid out like a map

or some rot like that. He'll overdo it one day if he isn't careful."

"A wife would soon put a stop to that performance," I agreed. "But it would be a fine thing for a Wall Street operator to peep into the future—if he could only do it."

"If he got a wife like mine," said Phillips quaintly, "he'd be too busy grabbing for money to waste time on his blamed tesseracts. Weird idea of his to say he would talk to me across sixty blocks without the phone. Sounds —a bit daffy."

As to that I have my private opinion, but I am trying not to obtrude it. When we reached Phillips' apartment his wife was still out at some dance or other. She was much younger than Phillips, and considered wireless telephones to be gratuitous annoyances—if indeed her husband's devotion to them did not amount to active marital misconduct. Sometimes, as on this occasion, when I came suddenly on his litter of instruments and the general fierce disorder in which he worked, I was inclined to agree with her.

The transmitting telephone, through which for some nights past we had been talking without wires to Gregson in his house downtown, stood as usual in the middle of the room that Phillips had appropriated as his workshop. It was a large and clumsy apparatus, the first crude model that had worked. But work it did; there was no doubt of that. Refinement of the methods was all that remained, now that the principle of the rotary arc had been established.

Still in his hat and overcoat, Phillips beamed affectionately on the misshapen, unfamiliar mass of wires and ebonite and polished metal.

"If it were not so late," he said musingly, "I'd like to try out that new condenser. We could have fitted it this afternoon if we had wished."

I reminded him that I had started to do so, but he had stopped me. I put down the case we had brought from Gregson's place rather definitely, to indicate that I had had enough of the business for one day. But Phillips could not tear his mind away from the subject. He grabbed up a receiver, and put it to his ear, just for the pleasure of feeling it there, I suppose; for, with the other instruments disconnected and locked in their cases, he must have realized quite well that he couldn't hear anything.

Still, the black disk of ebonite had barely touched his ear when I saw him start, and the expression on his face changed in a flash.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, and dropped the thing and faced me, white and trembling.

"It's Gregson," he said, badly jarred. "He's shouting for help."

"What hop-headed rot!" I picked up the receiver from the floor, where it had fallen. Of course, I could hear nothing.

"Brace up!" I said to Phillips. "You've been letting him get on your nerves with his phony psychology. How could he talk when he has no transmitter?"

But Phillips grabbed me by the arm with a hand that shook.

"He *did*, I tell you. And he's in trouble—Lord, he sounded like he was dying! I'll have to go and see—never forgive myself if I didn't."

So in another minute we were out in the street, chasing a taxicab. After we had caught one and tumbled in, Phillips became a little shamefaced.

"Of course, it's impossible," he said. "It must have been imaginary. But I seemed to hear him so plainly, I tell you. He called: 'Phillips, for God's sake——' He said it several times. Then he groaned something like 'I can't get back; I can't get back.' I could never forgive myself if anything had happened to him and I didn't go."

"He'll curse you for dragging him

out of his bed," I said discontentedly. "And I shall have something to say to you for keeping me out of mine. And you'll have the satisfaction of deserving it all."

"I didn't compel you to come," he snapped.

"How on earth could I go home and sleep on that pipe dream?" I demanded, with a touch of asperity. And for the rest of the spin downtown we said nothing. I fancy that when he came to ring the bell at Gregson's door Phillips was condemning himself for a lunatic just as busily as I was. The aged man-servant who admitted us rubbed his eyes at us and was disposed to grumble.

"Mr. Gregson's still up, in his study," he said. "I saw the light under the door when I come downstairs. I was in bed meself," he added aggrievedly. We pushed past him and hurried upstairs, tramping and talking with a rather unnecessary amount of noise.

"Gregson ought to hear about it, anyway, after what he threatened to do." Phillips' tone also took on a tinge of grievance. "It's his own fault for talking that darned nonsense."

We knocked at the door of Gregson's study, waiting a breathless moment for a reply. None came, and we regarded each other blankly, exchanging grunts of apprehension. Then, with a sudden convulsive decision, Phillips turned the knob and threw the door open.

"Gregson, old man!" he cried. "For Heaven's sake!"

Poised in the middle of the open space of carpet that he used for a promenade, Gregson stood motionless, gazing at the wall before him with eyes that saw nothing. What caused us to exclaim at him in utter dismay was that one leg was raised, with the foot thrust forward. An arm was extended in front of him, the other swung out behind, and his face bore an expression of purposeful intentness. He had a strange effect of having been frozen stiff in the very moment of activity; he looked like an instantaneous photograph of a man walking quickly, or a section of cinematograph film suddenly arrested in full career. It was plain also that he did not hear us, and was completely unconscious of our presence. And as Phillips seized him he swayed and fell limply to the floor.

We carried him to the lounge and sent his decrepit servant for a neighboring doctor. In the interval Phillips surrounded him with vain solicitude, opening his collar and trying to make him drink water. "Buck up, old man," he urged repeatedly. And once in a while he exclaimed, in mournful impatience: "Crazy dope!"

I examined the room with care, but there was nothing to explain the seizure. On Gregson's spacious desk before the open fireplace, the colored cubes were piled in disorder. In front of them, where he had been sitting, was the cardboard back of a writing pad. The leaves it had contained were scattered in strange profusion about the desk and the adjacent carpet. I gathered them up, hoping to find some clew. But it was in vain, for they appeared without exception to be covered with a furious, unintelligible scribble. It was just such inarticulate imitative stuff as a child who had still to learn the alphabet might turn out in emulation of its elders.

The doctor arrived with the air of bustling rescue affected by his craft. He was a very broad and bearded man with a loud voice, and his manner conveyed a sense of incredible knowledge and decision.

"Now, what's all this about?" he said, breezing over to the davenport. "Gregson ill, eh? Poor fellow! How did it happen?"

We told him all that we had seen since our arrival, while he felt the sufferer's pulse and shook his head wisely. As to the telephone call, Phillips chose to say nothing; and I could not imag-

ine myself asking any doctor to believe in it, let alone a doctor as matter of fact as this one. He went ahead industriously and rapped Gregson on the knee with the edge of his palm. After another shake of the head and a grunt of omniscience, he seized one of Gregson's feet and jerked the toe back. In neither case was there the slightest answering movement.

"Poor chap!" he said again, rising. "Reflexes all gone to smash."

He regarded us for a moment with raised eyebrows.

"Catalepsy," he said. "It might last a day or a week. Better get him to bed."

But before we could make any move to obey him, the rigid figure on the couch stirred and kicked out a long leg. It was a faint, trembling sort of kick, such a movement as a man might make in response to a succession of feeble electric shocks. Almost immediately afterward, the ankle that the doctor had bent back proceeded to jerk in the same feeble way. The doctor suddenly stopped bustling and sat down, gaping a little.

"Reflex action—but it's a minute late!" he exclaimed. "What in the name of Moses can that mean?" Probably for the first time in his professional career he was avowedly puzzled.

Gregson's subsequent behavior did not have the effect of illuminating him, either. The patient became gradually alive and moving, and from that by imperceptible gradations he advanced to a coruscating activity. If you can imagine a lanky, life-size clockwork figure slowly and jerkily moving arms and legs and eyes, as if almost run down, then gathering strength by degrees until its action becomes so rapid that the eye follows its movement with difficulty—if you can imagine this, you will have only a faint idea of the effect produced on us by Gregson's progressive seizure.

"He's recovering," the doctor said, as the figure on the couch slowly sat up, staring fixedly. And he inquired, in a tone of encouraging solicitude, whether Gregson felt any better.

Gregson paid no sort of attention to this, but his lips began to quiver into motion, and after a minute or so meaningless whispering noises proceeded from his throat. His eyes blinked very slowly, the lids moving in a succession of jerks, as indeed was the manner of all his movements in this stage.

"Queer!" he muttered, with his head buried in his hands. "I quite forgot—there's no such thing as time now. Or, rather, instead of traveling along time, I am living *in* it. Must be more careful—another fool break like that might stop my clock for good."

We grabbed him by the arms and exhorted and pleaded; we punched him and yelled in his ears, but it was useless. He began to talk more rapidly, and presently rose to walk about the carpet. We sat down out of range and watched in something like fear.

"Palms and white houses and the sunlit sea," he went on, with an accent of wonder. "And she smiling up at me. The beauty of her face is a wonderful thing to see."

He laughed a little incredulously, and walked up and down in silence for a space.

"Poor old Phillips!" he said, next time, and I saw Phillips start and whiten to the lips. "He wouldn't scoff if he knew. Fancy him working away like a beaver at his rotating arc, never dreaming that Vandersteyn is going to beat him out of the patent rights. Must give him some kind of a warning. Though, of course, he can't really help it—can't do anything at all. It's the future."

He laughed again, a little sadly, and went on talking with increasing speed and vehemence about a variety of things.

"Hoggenheim and his crowd," he jabbered, "working a bear raid on Amalgamated Tinplates. Lord, I'd have thought that stuff was solid. Must watch and jump in on the break. Win a fortune—what a chance! Make a note of it presently."

His tone was rising gradually to a high-pitched chirp, till it resembled the cry of some insect. At the last, though his lips still quivered with indescribable rapidity through the motions of speech, his voice became entirely inaudible. We heard no sound but the quick patter of his feet as he rushed to and fro over the carpet, and a low, continuous murmur like a muffled drum in the distance. It was this murmur that excited the doctor into action.

"It's hysteria, acute hysteria," he said, and leaped to his feet. "Keep him quiet and see that he doesn't hurt himself till I get back. I'll fetch some things and give him a sedative."

He rushed out of the room, kicking his own foot in his nervousness, and cursing as he stumbled down the stairs. Phillips catapulted across the carpet and closed the door after him.

"Mustn't let Gregson get out," he said, and sat down in the far corner of the room. "Hear that drumming noise? That's the poor old chap's heart."

Sudden realization caused me to clutch the back of my chair in an access of terror.

"Phillips, look!" I cried. "He's grown gray at the temples since we left him! Heavens, the man is living his life away like a spluttering fuse!"

Phillips only wrung his hands helplessly.

"I know; I've seen," he said. "But what can you do?"

"Make him sit down," I urged. "I can't stand it. Let's make him keep quiet."

All this time Gregson was whipping back and forward on the open space of carpet. His movements were like chain lightning; his every gesture had become a conjuring trick too rapid for the eye to follow. We nodded to each other and sprang upon him with one accord.

We were quick, but not quite quick enough to catch Gregson. The next thing we knew he had eluded us, and was already sitting in his chair at the desk while we grabbed insanely at each other in the middle of the room. He paid absolutely no attention to us. He had a new writing pad now, and as he wrote the leaves sprang from under his hand with the rapidity of printed copies from a rotary machine. I darted about, gathering them up as they fell, but it was impossible to keep pace with that frantic scribbling. Gregson's breathing was like that of a rabid dog, and the drumming of his heart became louder.

"He surely can't keep this up for long," Phillips almost whined.

And of course he couldn't. No human frame could have supported the deadly strain he was imposing on himself. When I had gathered the last sheet, I stood erect to find poor Gregson collapsed on his desk, his head in his arms. The drumming sound died away and left the study appallingly still.

We lifted Gregson again and carried him to the couch; and in a minute or two we were thanking Heaven that he breathed normally. Then the doctor burst into the room, carrying a black leather case. He exclaimed in surprise on seeing Gregson lying there apparently in a sound sleep.

But no sooner did he attempt to alter Gregson's position than the patient opened his eyes and sat up with startling celerity.

"What the——" he began, and pushed the doctor away with a certain decision. For a moment he remained running a hand through his rumpled

black hair and blinking at us in amazement.

"What's biting you all?" he demanded at last. It was his natural voice, and I can't tell you how good it sounded. "What are you doing here, Phillips? I thought you had gone home some hours ago. And the old doc? You all look crazy to me."

This sudden reversal of the positions took us by surprise. Even the doctor gaped.

"Why, the man thinks he's all right," he said resentfully.

"Gregson, old top, you've been very sick," said Phillips, in a sort of bedside manner. "We had to send for some one."

Gregson snorted. "Sick nothing! I never had an illness in my life. When the doctor comes to see me, it's to play chess—isn't it, doc? Guess I was a little played out, though. I must have fallen asleep without knowing it."

He attempted to rise to his feet, but incontinently toppled back onto the couch.

"Lord, but there must have been something wrong," he muttered, and felt at his arms and legs. "I'm all queer and stiff, as if I had been running and climbing mountains for hours."

"You're in a very badly shaken condition," put in the doctor, shaking a finger at him. "You must take a holiday at once. You must go to Bermuda and think of nothing at all for a month or two. Do you hear? Absolutely nothing at all."

"Guess it was overwork," replied Gregson, passing a hand over his eyes in a puzzled way. "Last thing I remember I was sitting alone at my desk. Yes, I believe I will go away for a rest presently. But I was never in Bermuda, doc. Isn't there any place nearer?"

"I said Bermuda!" roared the doctor. "And you heard me. That goes!" If he had any doubts about the malady, it was plain that he intended to permit himself none about the cure.

We left them together, making for Phillips' apartment to talk it over. But in the interval little Mrs. Phillips had returned; and I sat instead in silence and an attitude of profound discomfort, wearing what must have been a painfully amiable grin, while she gave her husband a bad quarter of an hour.

It appeared that in her opinion the best wife in the world would kick if her husband made her go to dances with other men in order that he might be free to fool away his time on a lot of botchy old instruments and thingumajigs that would not work.

"But they do work, my dear," Phillips protested mildly. "And it wasn't that at all. Poor Gregson was taken suddenly ill."

His pretty wife became sympathetic but scornful.

"No wonder! Why doesn't he get married and have some one to look after him and stop his nonsense?" she said. "He's likely to be ill, going on the way he does, all alone in that dreary house, and staying up nights to talk with Roper on that wireless junk of yours. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. And poor Ella Cartwright has been dying to catch him for a whole year. We all agree that it would be just the match for him, too."

She flounced out of the room.

"Gregson, you know," he said, and nodded. "I believe he really did it. Projected his mind, you know—beyond the threshold."

I emitted an incredulous snicker.

"Oh, I dare say, but you can't dismiss it like that. You would be laughing at men like Crookes and Oliver Lodge and Sidgwick—a host of good physicists. It all fits in. Those jerks of his!"

We exchanged shudders at the memory of them. Phillips became ardently expository.

"You know about nerve impulses to

the muscles? Their normal rate is ten a second. If you cover your ears and clench your teeth, you can hear them humming in the jaw muscles—a sort of musical note. Well, when we first saw Gregson he was getting only about one per second, not enough to make him move or hold him up. Of course he was getting them at the same rate in his eyes, so he couldn't see us. Couldn't see or hear anything at all. Then they started to speed up again till they jerked him about, and finally ran right away with him. How can you explain that?"

"Hysteria," I hazarded, falling back on the doctor.

"Hysteria be—— But do let us forget terminology for a moment. Giving a thing a name doesn't explain it, as Gregson says—with a good deal of force, I must admit. Isn't it more than likely that he projected a portion of his mind into a plane where there is no such thing as time—it's probably only an aspect, as Lodge says, of some fourth dimension—and that his every movement consequently, if he wanted to see the future, dragged his poor body through hours of life in a minute or two? If he hadn't stopped and waited for time to catch up, he would have been dead by now."

We considered this for a space in silence.

"But what part of his mind?" I demanded querulously.

"How should I know? It wasn't his subliminal mind, as you'd be inclined to expect. If it had been that, he wouldn't have needed to make notes, because he would have carried his memory along with him. No, it was that part of his mind that is really him—Gregson, the ego. Nobody knows where it is or what it is. You can drive needles into the brain and kill pretty nearly every function of it separately, but you never strike the ego. And, anyway, what *is* hysteria? As Gregson says, we don't know."

There was the sound from the corridor of a door opening.

"Rob, are you going to talk all night?" called little Mrs. Phillips, and I jumped for my hat.

"Coming, my dear," he answered. He was gazing abstractedly at the wireless-telephone instruments in the corner. Suddenly he sprang at them with an exclamation.

"Why, the condenser is disconnected!" he cried.

"Of course it is," I replied. "Didn't I tell you I was just going to fix the new one when you stopped me?"

"Then I couldn't possibly have heard Gregson in the receiver?"

"Of course you couldn't!" I said, with scorn. "Shows how utterly ridiculous the whole thing is."

But since that evening there have been moments when I have not felt so sure. On reaching home, I realized that the sheaves of meaningless scribble turned out by Gregson were still in the pocket of my overcoat. Curiously studying them, I noted a sort of symmetry about the stuff. The speed had been so great that here and there his pencil had torn the paper. The idea struck me that the writing would be merely extended, and that if I could condense it the notes would become legible.

With a sudden inspiration, I held the edge of one of the sheets to my eye, gazing along the lines lengthways in such a manner as to foreshorten them extremely. And in a moment I was greedily reading whole sentences.

Some passages are easy to recall, though most dealt with Stock Exchange matters that were Choctaw to the lay mind. One sheet read:

> Seems I am married. We are gazing at a sapphire sea through a frame of spreading palms, and we are ridiculously happy. Wouldn't Phillips and the rest laugh themselves into kinks?

I saw some more about this, and once

a line that said: "But what if I can't get back, after all! Still I *must* risk it." Right at the end of another sheet I recognized, with a start, my own name. "Of course, mustn't tell Roper, but ——"

Now what shouldn't he have told me, and why? Feverishly I hunted for that next slip, but the sequence of them was so disarranged that the search was in vain. Then a swift, cold fear surged over me, and to this day I thank whatever powers may be that I had the resolution to crumple the entire mass of scribble in my two hands and carry it down to the furnace. To the last sheet I burned it, poking the corners into the dying fire with a certain vindictive thoroughness.

Since then there are other circumstances that fill me with wonder. Gregson, for instance, stayed three months in Bermuda, and came back married to Miss Ella Cartwright, a fluffy and entirely discrepant young woman of whom he is absurdly fond. He now plays with a baby evenings, and last time I called on him the baby was playing with the battered remains of the tinted tesseracts. Gregson appeared to resent any allusion to the occult.

Another queer thing is that Vandersteyn fought us to a standstill in the courts on our claims to the rotating-arc method of wireless telephony, and we had to join forces with him and share the patent rights.

Phillips pretends nowadays that on sober reflection the whole business seems to have been pure poppycock—a mere collapse of Gregson's mind due to overstrain, in which he babbled of things that happened to be floating on the surface of his thoughts. In response to this I asked why, if Phillips really believed this, he should have given his brokers a scale order to sell Amalgamated Tinplates on the first break, clearing in consequence a profit of ten thousand dollars.

Phillips explained that he had experienced a sort of hunch.

"And as to Gregson's marriage," he added, "that's really quite simple. When I told my wife that he had been sent to Bermuda, it seems that she went right over to Ella Cartwright and sicked the girl after him. Told her to go around pale, and cough every now and then till her parents took her there for the season. My wife told me about it one night when we were talking in the dark and confessing our sins. No man's safe, you see, when womenfolk get the idea that it's time he married."

"But the spreading-palm stuff and the sunlit sea? He didn't dream of going to Bermuda when he said that."

"Gregson used to spend the winters at Nassau," said Phillips. "There's palms and sea all round the world, for that matter."

Which is doubtless true, and reassured me considerably. But still there are moments, especially in the dead of night, when I wonder idly what it was that Gregson, while the vision was upon him, thought he saw coming to me.

I am profoundly grateful, at the same time, that I never found out.

GEORGE WASHINGTON OGDEN contributes the complete novel for the next POPULAR. It is called "UNLUCKY MEN"—a story of the oil country. The central characters are an old man—jocularly called the PROPHET OF OIL—who never set his hand to anything that prospered; and his son, who tries to lift the hoodoo.

A Chat With You

THEY'VE put an end to the various lotteries. A man who wants to risk his money at a roulette wheel has a little trouble finding one even in a large city. People are discouraged from speculating in stocks and bonds. Horse-racing is frowned upon in most States, and many rich men are selling their racing stables. People no longer buy stock to any extent in gold or copper mines, and as for a man going prospecting after gold in Alaska or elsewhere—it is out of the question. Gold mining is now a business like making steel rails; it isn't gambling any more. We are credibly informed that the police of almost every large city are shutting up the pool rooms as fast as they find them. Does this lead you to believe that the spirit of gambling is dead? That there are no more forty-to-one shots to be played? That the golden days of '49 are never to return again, and that man must make his living by the sweat of his brow, and not win a fortune overnight in some dizzy game of chance?

TRUTH crushed to earth will rise again," as the poet tells us, and the spirit of gambling, although a deceptive spirit, is very like truth in that particular. There are other and newer ways of gambling, there are speculations underfoot now in this country just as dazzling and romantic as any of the bonanza days, fortunes are still made overnight, and tramps are transformed into millionaires in a few short weeks. It isn't gold that does it, it isn't diamonds—it's oil. If you happen to live in Oklahoma you know already something about the fortunes that are being poured out of the ground from the various gushers in that State. If you strike the oil you are like Monte Cristo, the world is yours—and any man may strike it. Go into the oil business if you will, but don't go into it if you have heart disease, and don't go into it under the impression that it is anything more or less than a game of chance. The oil may be discovered at any moment, and the well may run dry at any time. You never know how the luck is going to turn. The remarkable thing is that all this drama, all this welter and confusion, all these sudden spins of fortune's wheel are happening now in the United States. This new romance is going on in our midst, and for a long time we have been hoping to get some sort of an adequate picture of it.

WE have it. It is a book-length novel called "Unlucky Men," written by George Washington Ogden, and appearing complete in the next issue of THE POPULAR. It is a story of the oil fields of the Middle West, the newest and richest, of the fortunes made and lost there, of the aches, the strife, the disappointments woven into the texture of the most colorful life on this side of the Atlantic. If you like the freedom and sweep of big enterprises, if you

want to feel something of the stinging glow of life that goes to a man who risks all on one lone hope and wins, above everything if you want to meet some attractive and lovable people, you should read the novel the day it comes out. It will do more than entertain you, it will thrill you. It will open your eyes, moreover, to a phase of contemporary American life of which little has been written. We've been reading about war games and baseball games, but here is a new game, as big, as stirring, as interesting as any that has ever been played, and Mr. Ogden is giving us our first good view of it.

SPEAKING of the war, we have always been rather careful about war stories in this magazine. We object decidedly to publishing anything that is untrue to life, and so much of the actual business of warfare is so horrible, so sordid, so heart-rending that we feel that it is not our place to picture it. A three-part story by Earl Derr Biggers, author of "Seven Keys to Baldpate," and Robert Welles Ritchie, of whom you know, which deals with the war, will start in the next issue of THE POPULAR, out on the stands two weeks from to-day. It is called "Inside the Lines," and is the narrative version of a play which made one of the great successes of the season in New York. In this story you get none of the actual action of the war. The war is, in a way, a sort of background to the action of one of the most remarkable tales of suspense, mystery, and intrigue that has ever appeared in any magazine. The whole action of the story takes place on the great rock of Gibraltar. As you read, a thread of plot, and counterplot, of daring in intrigue, is spun out before your eyes. It is a mystery story which moves rapidly and unerringly to the solution of the mystery, and yet which keeps up the suspense till the very last. It is a story of the German spy system, of the underworld which lies beneath the sea of diplomacy, of a strife that is all the more deadly because of its secrecy and silence. The Americans who are dragged into the net of the spy system, the English army officers of the garrison, the German workers from the Wilhelmstrasse are all alive and real. As a rule, we dislike the novelized version of a play, but this was an unusual play, and is an unusual novel. The critics who saw the play pronounced it the best war play since "Secret Service," and the same has been said of the novelized version. It would be easy to fill half the issues of THE POPULAR with novelized versions of plays, but a chance like this doesn't come once in twenty years. We have never seen or read a play which had so much story and suspense to it, and we have never known a play to be turned into a novel with so much literary skill. It will be completed in THE POPULAR in three big installments. Six weeks from to-day you will have the whole of it.

THE short stories in the next issue of the magazine are a remarkable array of fiction in themselves. Holworthy Hall's story, "All on the Ground Floor," reminds one of George Randolph Chester's financial stories, and is just as good in its way. "Bat Shy" is a baseball story, by Foxhall Williams, of the well-known POPULAR brand, which means the best sort of baseball story written. This magazine invented the baseball story. There are also stories by Henry Herbert Knibbs, Wilbur Hall, H. C. Witwer, and others.

SECRETS OF PITCHING

By Burt L. Standish

This book will tell you something new, no matter what you know about baseball. Every player or fan who wants to know how to make the ball accomplish all kinds of feats should own a copy. It is the best book on pitching ever published. *Profusely Illustrated.*

Price, 15c. postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, 79 Seventh Ave., NEW YORK CITY

ASTHMA

There is no reason why you should go on suffering with Asthma or Hay Fever. Use Himalya, the DEPENDABLE remedy.

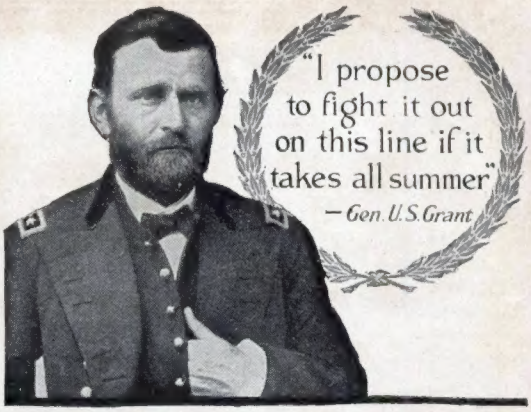
Keep Your Head Clear

all the time. Let us show you testimonials from hundreds who were benefited.

Send for FREE Trial Bottle to-day.

HIMALYA CO.
84 Warren Ave., W.
Detroit, Mich.

RELIEVED BY
HIMALYA



Resolve to Win!

Determination made Grant one of the greatest generals in history. The world knows his story. It knows, too, the stories of thousands of other determined men, who succeeded because they had a purpose and stuck to it.

Do you want to succeed? Do you want that better job? Do you want that increase in pay?

If you *do* want to get out of the rut—if you *are* determined to make something of yourself, send the International Correspondence Schools the attached coupon. Tell them what kind of position you want and they will show you how you can fit yourself to get it.

More than 500 determined men and women got better positions last month solely as a result of I. C. S. training. They secured this training in their own homes, at small cost and without losing time from their every-day work.

Determine to mark and mail the coupon to-day

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

Box 855 SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X

ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING	SALESMANSHIP	
Electric Lighting & Railways	ADVERTISING	
Telephone Expert	Window Trimming	
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING	Show Card Writing	
Mechanical Drafting	Lettering and Sign Painting	
Gas Engines	ILLUSTRATING	
CIVIL ENGINEERING	Designing	
Surveying and Mapping	BOOKKEEPING	
MINE FOREMAN AND SUPT.	Stenography and Typewriting	
STATIONARY ENGINEERING	Higher Accounting	
ARCHITECTURE	Commercial Law	
Building Contractor	GOOD ENGLISH FOR EV'YONE	
Architectural Drafting	Teachers Course	
Concrete Engineering	English Branches	
Structural Engineering	CIVIL SERVICE	Spanish
PLUMBING AND HEATING	AGRICULTURE	German
AUTO RUNNING	POULTRY	French
Motor Boat Running	Chemistry	Italian

Name_____

Present Occupation_____

Street and No. _____

City_____ State_____

A Fresh Morning, a Fresh Mount and a Fresh-Rolled Cigarette

— there's a combination to kindle a man's spirits with the pure joy of living! The delicious *freshness* of "Bull" Durham hand-made cigarettes appeals to the countless thousands of smart, active, sport-loving, health-loving American men — gives added zest and exhilaration to their enjoyment.

GENUINE

"BULL" DURHAM

SMOKING TOBACCO

To millions of experienced smokers throughout the world "Bull" Durham means much more than a particular brand of smoking tobacco—it stands for a *distinctive form* of tobacco enjoyment, incomparably satisfying. No other tobacco has that wonderful, unique fragrance of "Bull" Durham. No other cigarettes have the delicious freshness and mellow-sweet flavor of "Bull" Durham hand-made cigarettes. You only appreciate this when you "roll your own."

Ask for FREE package of "papers" with each 5c sack

FREE An illustrated Booklet, showing correct way to "Roll Your Own" Cigarettes, and a package of cigarette papers, will both be mailed, *free*, to any address in U. S. on request. Address "Bull" Durham, Durham, N. C., Room 1118.

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY

DRESS FREE TO YOU

POSITIVELY WILL NOT COST YOU A CENT

EXQUISITE NEW MODEL HOME DRESS

READ EVERY WORD. This practical, pretty, serviceable, new model, good-wearing Home Dress consists of two pieces and cap. **Long tunic coat** with wide belt, pocket, easy-swing sleeves. **Full circular skirt;** extra length, can be shortened. **Jaunty cap** for boudoir use or to protect hair while dusting, or for the garden. All pieces piped with solid color material to match figure in fabric. The coat, or tunic, may be worn separately as a dressing sacque.

FREE HOME DRESS. This unique model is truly artistic and will look much nicer on you than the picture below can show. **Sizes:** 36 to 46. **Colors:** white ground with figures in black, copenhagen blue, rose or heliotrope shades. Lawn or percale. Washable. For use in home, garden, outings, etc., this dress is especially desirable and attractive. Dresses of this new two-piece model are sold in aristocratic New York stores.

REASON FOR FREE OFFER. I want to introduce ELIZABETH KING TOILET SPECIALTIES. They are of surpassing excellence. Exquisite massage cream, delightful face powders, imported perfumes, high grade soaps, wonderful lotion for the skin, manicuring articles, etc. Ladies are happy in using my preparations because they are of such high quality, delicacy and superfine excellence. Prices are reasonably low. Therefore, to add to my wide circle of patrons I offer to send the Home Dress, absolutely free, if you will purchase only $3.60 worth of my goods.

FREE DRESS

FINE ASSORTMENT. The box will contain 20 articles, all of highest merit and useful to every woman. You can keep all for yourself or dispose of them among friends. You can easily sell all in an hour thus getting your money back and obtaining the pretty Home Dress without cost.

YOU CAN PAY LATER. You may send $3.60 in full payment now, or if you prefer you may send me instead only 36 cents in stamps now, to cover parcel post, packing, etc., and mail a money-order later on, after goods have come.

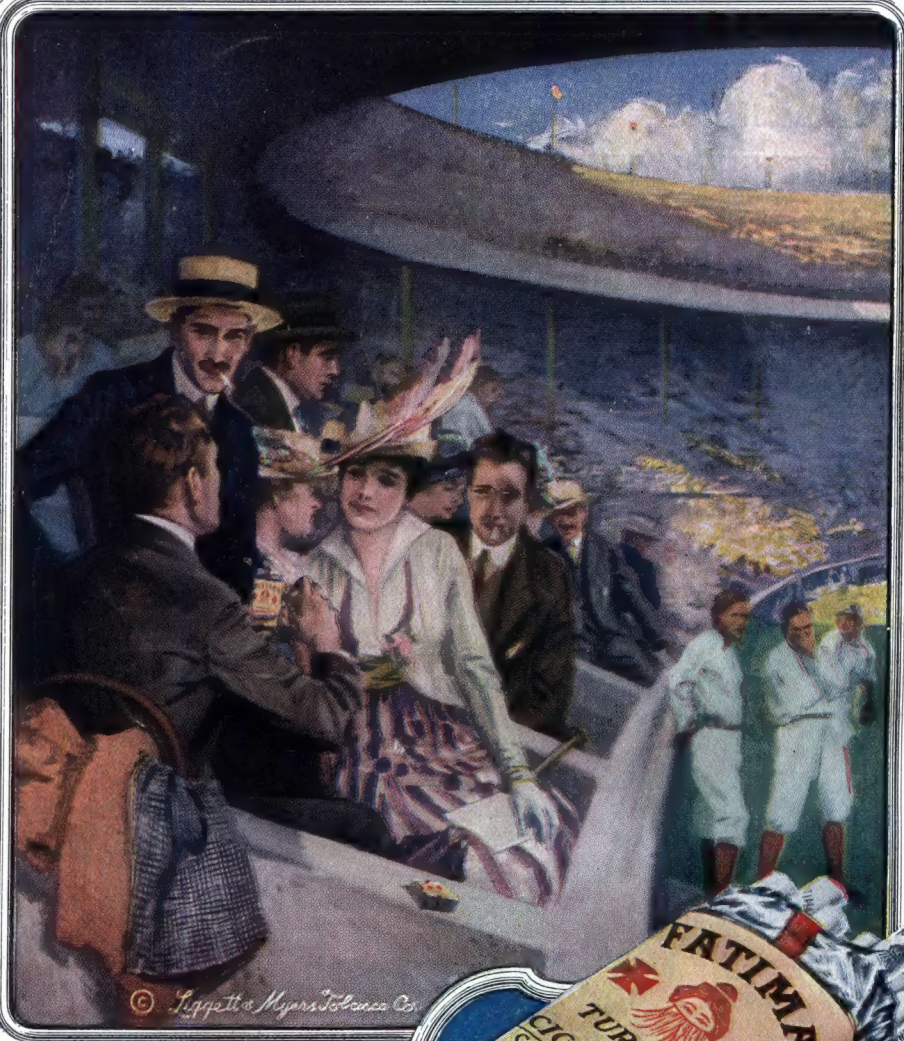
ALL SENT IN ONE BOX. Mention what size and color of Home Dress you prefer, also whether lawn or percale; give your name and full address. The 20 Toilet Specialties will be sent promptly with the Home Dress so you receive all together in one box.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED. I mean to give you and your friends such **surpassing value** and quality that we will do more business together. Therefore I promise that if you are not actually **delighted** with the beautiful dress or if you and your friends are not thoroughly pleased with the superior toilet goods, I will redeem them for every cent paid! What could be fairer? **Don't delay.** Sit down and answer this at once so you can have the lovely dress and box of selected, practical goods as soon as possible. Address:

ELIZABETH KING,

154 East 32d Street, 247 D, NEW YORK CITY

SPECIAL: *If, when accepting above offer, you give the names and addresses of five ladies to whom I can send my catalogue of Toilet Specialties, I will include a valuable book of 31 private, personal lessons in Beauty Culture, extra, and also free, as a premium. Lessons teach facial massage, complexion beautifying, perfect bust development, reduction of double chin and over-fatness, removal of pimples and freckles, beautifying the eyes, safe and permanent removal of superfluous hair—and many other secrets.—ELIZABETH KING.*



Distinctively Individual— Anywhere

FATIMA

The Turkish Blend *Cigarette*